PARTISAN REVIEW

A Bi-Monthly of Revolutionary Literature

VOLUME II, No. 8 JULY-AUGUST 1935

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PARTISAN REVIEW No. 8

NEW CONTRIBUTORS: ALBERT HALPER has just returned from a lengthy journey through Europe. While in the Soviet Union he made arrangements for the translation of his novel, *The Foundry*, into Russian. . . . The three Mexican stories in this issue were translated by LANGSTON HUGHES during his recent trip to Mexico. They were written by JOSE MANCISIDOR, delegate to the recent American Writers Congress and editor of *Ruta*, published in Veracruz; and by ARTZUBIDE and GONZALES who also contribute to this outstanding Mexican literary journal. . . . RICHARD WRIGHT is a young Negro Communist poet of Chicago's South Side. . . . Beginning with this issue PARTISAN REVIEW will not be published as the organ of the John Reed Club of New York but as a revolutionary literary magazine edited by a group of young Communist writers, whose purpose will be to print the best revolutionary literature and Marxist criticism in this country and abroad.

FUTURE ISSUES will contain, in addition to the type of contributions hitherto published, groups of poems and long poems by American poets, as well as examples of revolutionary verse from Germany, France, England, and the Soviet Union. PARTISAN REVIEW will publish several short novels, short stories, and selections from unpublished novels, sketches by workers and topical reportage by European masters of this type of writing, literary letters from foreign countries as well as criticism by the leading Marxist writers in the U. S. . . . Announcements of several literary contests for the best long poem and the best worker's sketch will be made in a forthcoming issue. . . . In reducing the price of PARTISAN REVIEW from 25¢ to 15¢ a copy, the editors believe that this removes the main obstacle preventing the magazine from reaching a wide audience. If this belief is verified, PARTISAN REVIEW will soon become a monthly.

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MASK, IMAGE, AND TRUTH

Joseph Freeman

Means not, but blunders round about a meaning;
And he whose fustian's so sublimely bad,
It is not poetry, but prose run mad.

—POPE

A FRIEND WRITES ME: "The pogrom on Marxian criticism continues unabated. It is said that a well-known author, sympathetic to the Left-Wing, has written an article in which he assails criticism in general and the Marxian brand in particular. The other day he harangued a group of writers on the necessity of defending 'creative' writing against criticism. The word 'creative' is beginning to reek with the grease of piety. The other day I was reading in the *Literaturnia Gazetta* that much the same situation prevails in the Soviet Union, and they even have a special phrase for it which, translated literally, means *critic-hounding.* Furthermore, the Party there is beginning to see that this pogrom on criticism, aside from certain well-known historical justifications, has its political meaning."

This news has an ironical side. The author who is said to be leading the "revolt" against criticism is himself a prolific critic who for several years has attacked Marxism. And, as is typical of many people who object mixing politics with literature, he has turned politician. Is not the call against Marxist critics a political and organizational activity? It smacks a little of Technocracy, which urged "scientists" of every shade of opinion to unite against "politicians" of all the social classes.

American literature suffers from strange distortions and confusions. When a Marxist writer describes facts as he sees them, he is a paid propagandist for the Kremlin. When a bourgeois writer utters the meanest, most malicious, most barbarous superstitions, he is exercising his right of free speech, his "intellectual integrity" and his imagined monopoly of truth. We say, with the best western critics from Prosper de Barante down, that literature reflects the social struggle. That makes us "artists in uniform." They say that our poor, hungry, jobless, coatless, foodless, roomless writers who bum nickles from each other around Union Square for coffee and crullers—that these are living on Moscow gold. That is impartial, aesthetic criticism. Archibald MacLeish says some very ques-

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tionable things about Communists, Jews, etc. He breaks up his editorial into short lines, calls it a *fresco,* and lo! we have a poem. His prejudices are now "creative" art, A Marxist reviewer analyses a book in sober prose that plunges into essentials, and he is "merely" a critic—uncreative, dogmatic, abstract, the propounder of sterile formulas. The good critic is one who uncritically ballyhoos the productions of his friends, and rewrites the publishers' blurbs for people with inflated reputations.

But the dividing line between "creation" and "criticism" is not so simple. I have just been reading Thomas Wolfe's *Of Time and the River.* It is an extraordinary novel, rich in narrative, observation and feeling, resounding with strong rhetoric; yet it also contains a curious section describing that "dreary, gray and hopeless-looking Jew" named Abraham Jones: *"Tho whole flag and banner of his race* was in the *enormous putty-colored nose."* Abe changes his name to "Alfred," and the author roars that the Jew has "taken *violently,* by *theft* and *rape"* this sacred Aryan handle. The Jew does not merely grin: he grins "with Kike delight"—radically different from any other kind of delight. And they say that Communist writers abuse people and call them names! But this is a novel, a work of "creative" art. *Kike* is a "poetic" adjective.

Do not think it clouts Abe Jones only. The great city swarms with "the faces, *cruel,* arrogant and knowing of the *beak-nosed* Jews." The Hero, Eugene Gant, teaches English at a university; his class consists, apparently, entirely of Jews; but no one is interested in the course except Abe Jones, who smiles "wearily, *cruelly, contemptuously";* and the "faithful" Boris Gorewitz, who sits "very close, ah fragrantly, *odorously* close" to his teacher, turning his *"cruel* grinning Yiddish face" to the Hero with a "soft Oh-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho! of *contemptuous* laughter."

There are references to Jewish lawyers that make Theodore Dreiser look like Theodore Herzl: "the hordes of *beak-nosed shysters,* poured out of the law school year by year," who are "adept in every dodge of dishonorable trickery, in working every crooked wire"—not as lawyers, regardless of race, color or creed, functioning in a social system based on fraud, but as *Jewish* lawyers.

Abe-Alfred's spirit is "gloomily engulfed in a great cloud of *Yiddish* murk"—presumably different from the "nordic" murk that drives the Hero across hundreds of pages shrieking where shall I go, what shall I do, what is youth, what is love, what is life; getting drunk, going to the whores, and beating up his friends until they are senseless.

And the Jewish women!—as "old as nature, and as round as the earth: they had a curve in them: they had gone to the wailing walls of death and love for *seven thousand years."* No less! The Jewish women waited for our "faustian" hero a la Spengler "with rich yolky cries";

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they "pressed around him at his table with insistent surge . . . they pressed on him their *sensual wave.*"

You understand, of course, that this sensual wave is in the Jewish women, not in the "faustian" hero; at least not at this point, for otherwise he rushes up and down the world boiling with gigantic, heroic, epic, unfathomable, endless, infinite, eternal, wonderful, unprecedented, unparalleled, unique, unheard of, terrible and sacred desire.

You understand, too, the type of Russian who thought the gypsies were more sensual than the Slavs, the white who thinks so about Negro women, the Dutch trader who goes into ecstasies about the Polynesians, the Yanqui who is impotent at home and a Pantagruel in Havana, and the Jewish Eugene Gant whose emotional antennae respond *only* to the "sensual waves" of gentile girls.

Universal race-prejudice fostered by bourgeois civilization, combined with the sexual taboos and repressions prevalent in the western world, make such illusions common. But it takes a peculiar mind to generalize from this as Eugene Gant does. The Jewish boys stand around our "faustian" Hero with a "sense of acceptance, *as if they had known for thousands of years that their women would betray them with a Gentile lover,* and yet with a kind of *triumph,* as if they also knew that they would *regain* them in the end"—like stolen cows—an image worthy of a culture that looks upon women as private property and upon love as a "triumph" of the masculine ego.

Our Hero considers the Jews and he knows—that they would *never* be "wild and drunken, or beat their knuckles bloody on a wall, or lie beaten and senseless in the stews"; but he also knows that "with smooth faces they would decant the bottle for some man who did, and that they would read him quietly to his desperate fate with their dark, mocking and insatiate eyes." He also knows that the Jews can "live completely in a world of cruel and subtle intuitions, unphrased and unutterable intensities of cruelty, shame and horror without *lifting a finger or turning a hand.*"

The Sacrosanct Oracle

So much for Jesus, Spinoza, Marx and the thousands of Jews who have been imprisoned, executed and murdered for passionate participation in great social movements which seek to improve the life of man; and for Freud who specialised in illuminating the "unutterable horrors."

Now if the author had written such stuff directly in an article, he would have been damned by everybody from the *New Masses* to the *New York Times.* He would have been placed in the same category with Hitler, Goebbels, Strasser and that Aryan Rosenberg who came by his "Alfred" honestly, without violence, rape or theft: he would have been given the

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merry *ha-ha* (or should one say Oh-ho-ho-ho-ho?) which the liberal gentile hands those who believe that Jews, Negroes and other "inferior" races are more corrupt, mysterious, cunning, sensual and patient than the "faustian" hero.

But the author did not directly flaunt the beak-nosed banner of the race, the Jewish "soul," the Yiddish murk, the "kike" grin. He invented a character named Eugene Gant and another named Abraham Jones; and, as we know, an author is not responsible for his characters—even when, as in this case, it is hard to locate the point at which the character stops talking and the author begins. He has given us "art," and now the illusions of the anti-semite, the blind, stupid, blundering confusion of fantasy with fact, the depiction of subjective "murk" as objective reality, the babbling about the specific as if it were the general becomes sacred and inviolate. You may laugh at the "critical" nonsense of Gregor Strasser; you may not scoff at the "creative" nonsense of Thomas Wolfe.

How careless of Dreiser to write his infantile opinions about the Jews to Hutchins Hapgood! Why did he speak directly, "critically," in his own name, and rouse the ire of the Jews, the liberals, the radicals? If he had only placed those opinions in the mouth of a "character"; if the libel had only come from "Gregory Butterfiddle," or better still, "Jake Cohen," no one would squawk. It would no longer be sentimental confusion, but "creative writing," holy, infallible, "sincere."

Under the corrupt standards of current bourgeois aesthetics, the "creative" artist may slander workers, Negroes, Jews, anyone he likes; he may give way to his most reactionary impulses, yet not be called to account as he would be if he spoke directly. The "creative" writer is relieved of the responsibilities which, where art is sound, he has always had from the Greeks to our own day. He is treated as a priest who speaks from on high, the sacrosanct oracle whose god is "art."

But there is a difference between true art and "murk," whether that murk be bourgeois or proletarian. There is a difference between character-drawing and carricature. One does not think of Joyce's *Bloom* primarily as a Jew, but as a certain type of intellectual who happens to be a Jew. Proust's *Bloch* is offset by *Swann*.. Shylock is not wholly a repulsive character; he is redeemed by a certain nobility; and Shakespeare does not editorialise as narrator about the race as a whole.

A writer may dissociate himself from his character provided he does so *in the novel itself*. How he does it is the secret of art. But he cannot dissociate himself from the effect which his work creates. He selects the theme, the characters, the setting, the action, the dialogue; he chooses all, describes all, evaluates all, consciously and unconsciously. We know that two authors describing the same character will create two different, even

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opposite effects. This is true in the play, where the author as such does not appear at all; how much more true in the novel, where part of the effect is created not by giving the words or thoughts of a character, but by the author's direct intervention. In this sense, the author may be said to be, willy nilly, a central character in his novel. Abe Jones' grin was described as *Kike* not by Eugene Gant but by the narrator.

Perhaps Thomas Wolfe is utterly free of Eugene Gant's prejudices about Jews, women, Frenchmen, etc. He may say: "I am describing an imaginary character and I am not responsible for his emotions, thoughts and actions." He may say this, and we must believe him. It would be foolish for anyone to accuse Wolfe of race prejudice if he openly and specifically denied it. But we have the right to say: "Whatever you may believe in your private life, you wrote this section of the novel so ineptly, you intervened editorially so often in the story, you so mingled the words of narrator and character, that, whatever your intentions may have been, the net effect of that part of your story is anti-semitic."

Reason and Image

This, indeed, is the function of the critic, who is primarily concerned not with intention but with effect. The author cannot help infusing his imaginary world, which cannot be separated from the real world, with his emotions. He may say:

"This is how these people appear to me." Why may not the articulate reader who is called "critic' 'say: "And this is how your book appears to me? Moreover, I know the kind of people you describe, and you have falsified their characters, and you have used them as symbols of their race or class. You may not have intended such a generalization—but in failing to make clear what you were doing, in failing to dissociate yourself from the Hero, in echoing his ideas through those passages in which the anonymous narrator speaks, you become responsible for the impression you convey. We may not question your intentions, of which you alone have certain knowledge; we may be sure that some of your best friends are Jews—but in that case you've done a damn bad piece of writing which is false not only to the facts but to your own best intentions."

Needless to say, disagreement with Wolfe's treatment of the Jew in no sense constitutes an evaluation of his work as a whole. Great writers, whose work belongs to the finest treasures of world literature, have created images of the Jew distorted by class relationships and literary traditions—among them Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev and Dostoevsky. It is the business of the Marxist critic to trace the social and literary bases of such distortions; and six years ago Joshua Kunitz did so in a brilliant little volume which analysed the changing status of the Jew in Russia and its reflection

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in Russian literature. Such analyses are invaluable, and no serious writer can object to them. But even if some writers do object to a social interpretation of their work—as is the case with those who have been conducting a persistent agitation against Marxist criticism—why should that deflect us from speaking the necessary truths? Why should we let any writer who happens to be called "creative" delude us into believing that chauvinism and self-adulation, hatred, fear and misunderstanding of everything which lies *outside* his provincial and class prejudices is either art or American? If a poet may give his views of the revolutionary movement, why may we not give our views of the poet? Is it any less a "creative" act to reflect about a work of art than to slander one's friends, lovers and benefactors under fictitious names?

We know what happens: the moment the critics stop writing about a certain kind of poet, novelist or playwright, he stands up in the cafes and studios and yells to the four corners of the city that he is the victim of a conspiracy of silence. *Citizens, I am being ignored!* When the critics do write about him but fail to declare him the equal of Dostoyevsky, Proust, Shelley and Ibsen, they are not good critics; they are merely pompous bigots wallowing in the opium of dialectic materialism. Needless to say, the best poets, novelists and critics do not do this. Neither do they make false and invidious distinctions between "creative" and "critical" writing as if the first were sacred and the second sterile, just as true scientists do not oppose practical to theoretical science.

The Marxist critic interprets, appreciates and applauds good art, but he rips the masks off the priests of art. He exposes the propagandist behind the poet, translates the equivocal images of verse into the lucid concepts of prose, holds the author responsible for his characters when these actually do speak for him. The Marxist critic is not concerned with puffing or blasting reputations, with log-rolling or intrigue. He wishes to promote the best, the most vigorous, the most illuminating art. He seeks to propagate the truth.

But every man sees the world from some viewpoint. Because the Marxist critic sees it from the viewpoint of the revolutionary working-class, a certain type of "creative" writer, anxious not to be disturbed in his allegiances, preconceptions and magic incantations, hates the critic, as the church hates the unbeliever, the industrial baron the labor organizer, the capitalist politician the Communist.

The "united front" against Marxist critics headed by writers fresh from the reactionary camp is a "united front" against the Marxist deciphering of bourgeois symbols. Without the Communist, the propertied classes would *unrestricted* bamboozle the masses with their "democratic" images. Without the Marxist critic the "faustian" creative writer would

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unhampered propagate his poisonous ideas in obscure, false but effective images.

These images are effective because they have three thousand years of religion, three centuries of bourgeois ideology, the whole culture of capitalism to sustain them; because they evoke emotional habits, deep, deep in the souls of most of us, engraved there from earliest childhood by the priests, the pedagogues, the journalists, the politicians, the poets of the propertied classes—and by the day to day relations between classes and individuals necessarily imposed by the conditions of capitalist society.

Disraeli's Wisecrack

Marxist criticism makes such images less effective. It exposes the bourgeois philosopher's formulas, the poet's myths, the journalist's "impartial" reports for what they are—propaganda for the mouldy attitudes of the dying world. The fact that such attitudes are sometimes unconscious, blind, "sincere" does not make any difference. Perhaps Hitler, too, is "sincere." Certainly, the Big Businessman "sincerely" believes that laws, ideas and actions in defense of monopoly capital are in the best interests of "civilization." No one in Russia doubted Dostoyevsky's sincerity, yet how many of the best writers in the various progressive camps arose in chorus to damn *The Possessed,* his libel on the revolutionary movement —among them the creative writer Maxim Gorki.

For that matter, creation is inseparable from good criticism in modern literature, as a glance at European and American letters will show. Dante was a critic, so were Tasso, Ronsard, Sidney, Ben Jonson, Corneille, Dryden, Pope, Goldsmith, Sam Johnson, Voltaire, Lessing, Diderot, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Landor, Coleridge, Gautier, Poe, Tolstoy; so are Eliot, Pound, Valery, Yeats, Shaw, Dos Passos, MacLeish, Mike Gold and John Howard Lawson.

Who sneers at poets? The philistine. Who, ignoring history, said that critics are men who have failed in art and literature? The very clever, very cynical, very adroit but not very profound rhetorician Benjamin Disraeli.

Surely it is no more "creative" to caricature proletarian ideas in verse than to expose bourgeois ideas in prose. When a novel or play or poem describes everyone as a louse except the Hero, who mistakes his own vindictiveness for poetic observation, we have every right in the world to say: *this is false art.* When some one, in all "sincerity" writes a Hearst editorial in free verse, we have every right in the world to point out its fascist ideas. We cannot permit anyone to bully us into swallowing his values, creeds, or opinions merely because he uses a form which convention calls "creative." We reserve the right to think.

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This goes both ways. The critic, no more than the poet, may pretend to be infallible, laying down the irrefutable "line," uttering ex-cathedra the last word about life and art. Let the creative writer, or his critical partisans, take issue with a specific critic on a specific question. Thomas Wolfe may say to me: "You are mistaken about Abe Jones. You have read that passage with an oversensitive regard for the negative sides of Abe, and overlooked the tribute I paid him and his race. The Jew in my novel is, like Shylock, not wholly repulsive; he has his noble side; besides, I am under no obligation in this great and free republic of ours to treat minor nationalities according to a Comintern thesis. My Jewish friends have taken no exception to the portrait."

That, in effect, is what some people said in reply to Michael Gold's complaint against MacLeish's *Frescos*. They went further and said: "But isn't it true that many of the Communists one meets in New York are Jews who talk English with a foreign accent?" This raises a whole problem of imagery and symbolism in poetry.

Yes, it is true that some Communists are Jews who speak with a foreign accent. But that is no indictment of Communism, Jews or accents. Communism is an international movement of workers, farmers and intellectuals of all races and nationalities, to which Jews have contributed their share of fighters and heroes. There are also Jewish bankers and industrialists whose interests lie with the gentile bourgeoisie as against the workers, Jew and gentile alike. The Communist movement in America, as everywhere else, is not predominantly Jewish. It is no more "disgraceful" for an alien worker to speak English with an accent than for an American tourist to butcher the French language in Paris cafes. The producers of America's coal, iron, steel, automobiles, clothes, the men and women who labor in heavy industry, are predominantly of alien stock—and they are as American as the parasites who invest their "unearned increment" in foreign princes. The interests and aims of the proletariat transcend racial and national boundaries. In a strike, Negro and white workers, Jews and gentiles, the native and foreign-born American fight side by side against the employers, whose greed for profit transcends race, nationality and language.

A poem, play or novel describing "radicals" which would convey that impression—not in the abstract language of sociology which I have used, but in the living images of creative art—would be telling the truth. A poem, play or novel which presents the Communist *only* as a Jew with an accent; the Jew *only* with a beak-nose, a cruel, contemptuous, arrogant face, is distorting the truth.

Such a symbol or image is based on a prejudice which the fascists of the world exploit. The German reaction said communists were paid

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agents of France; the Russian reaction said they were paid agents of the Kaiser; the American reaction says they are paid agents of Stalin. Everywhere the reaction paints Communism as an alien movement. It uses the power of dark, ugly, chauvinist hatred against the organized class-conscious proletariat. And everywhere the reaction says that Communism is a Jewish movement. It directs the dark, ugly hatred against the Jew, as old as western Europe, against the organized, class-conscious proletariat, which is predominantly gentile. This was the technique of Hitler. The image *Communist-alien-Jew* is the fascist image which identifies the "reprehensible" part with the "hateful" whole, which evokes foul, primitive, murderous passions against alien and Jew in order to strike at the proletarian movement.

Now the poet who symbolizes the Communist by an East Side accent may not have Hitler's intentions. In that case he is a bad poet. He has defeated his own ends. He has conveyed a lie when he wanted to convey the truth.

Lenin and Proust

I happened to have picked on the distorted image of the Jew because it has cropped up so persistently in recent American literature. But it is only an example of my thesis, not its core. What is true in this instance is true in general: the poet defeats his own ends when he uses the accidental as an image for the essential, or mistakes the part for the whole, or assumes unity where there is profound difference and conflict. One does not have to be a creative writer, a poet, a genius to understand this. A good newspaper correspondent knows that you cannot convey a true picture of a country or region by confining yourself to immediate, accidental impressions. It may be that the people in your hotel— broken remnants of the old regime—one and all curse Soviet life; but if you cable their comments without *saying* that they are broken remnants of the old regime, a negligible and hostile handful, if you conclude that they speak for the Russian people as a whole, you are falsifying reality. If you do not travel and meet workers, peasants, engineers, economists, school-teachers, etc. in various parts of the country, if you do not acquaint yourself with the past of the old Russia and the aims of the new one, if you do not measure and compare and analyze and reassemble the contradictory fragments into *essentials,* you will never understand Soviet life. That is why the poet E. E. Cummings, turning reporter, gave us such a distorted picture in *Eimi.* The marginal people in the fringe of Soviet life accidentally encountered on a brief holiday, became for him the image of a vast land, and his own terror and confusion in the face of something new and powerful became the "soul" of 160,000,000 people.

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The opposite is also true. The average bourgeois correspondent comes to Mexico laden with exotic presuppositions, the scion of a "superior" race in a colonial country. He notes and describes the brilliant landscape, the serapes, the tequila, the jarabe, the frescos at the National Palace, the bull-fights, the parading army, the village fiestas, the Aztec legends; he ignores or misunderstands the life of the workers and peasants, the agrarian and labor movements, the daily struggle of the peon against the landowner, of the worker against his native and foreign exploiter. The image of Mexico which he conveys to his reader is a distortion of the truth; and though he is "merely" a reporter, he is no different from the average "creative" artist and writer who ventures south of the Rio Grande. Consider the *final* effect produced by Upton Sinclair's *Thunder Over Mexico.*

There is an amazing amount of nonsense about "creative" writing, anyway. Lenin's writing is a thousand times more creative than Proust's; *Ten Days that Shook the World* is more creative than a lot of fiction published today. Anyone who doesn't understand this, doesn't know what creative means. The mere use of such forms as verse, the play or the novel does not in *itself* make a writer "creative." There is not a good poet alive who would not rather have written a single essay by Walter Pater than all the verse of Edgar Guest, or Milton's political pamphlets rather than Sam Shipman's plays.

Differences in form are important. We must not fall into the illusion which speaks both of Shakespeare and Schopenhauer as "poetry" because either may arouse emotion. But that aura which a man acquires by doing "creative" work is certainly not to be won by mere *external form.* Imagination, perception, insight, intensity, truth and adequate *intrinsic* form are some of the things required. Effect upon the audience is also important. The audience may be wrong; writers have often been rejected who turned out to be geniuses; but just as often the diamond-studded belt has been handed to the palooka. If the critic may be mistaken, so may the poet. Each must say his say and take the consequences; and in an era like ours, when basic values are being transvalued, the poet is often critical and the critic creative.

Lenin pointed out that Tolstoy was an "artist of genius" who gave an "incomparable picture of Russian life" and contributed great works to the literature of the world. But Tolstoy was also "a landlord playing the fool in Christ . . . a worn-out hysterical mud-wallower called the Russian intellectual." Tolstoy on the one hand relentlessly criticised capitalist exploitation, exposed government violence, lashed the comedy of the courts and government administration, revealed the gulf between growing wealth and growing poverty, the achievements of civilization alongside the barbarism and suffering among the masses. At the same time he advocated

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"one of the most odious things in the world—religion." Lenin further pointed out that Tolstoy's views were not only "the contradictions of his personal thoughts, but a reflection of those highly complicated, contradictory conditions which determined the psychology of various classes and various sections of Russian society in the post-reform but pre-revolutionary era."

Why may not a Marxist critic, acknowledging the gifts of the poet, novelist or playwright, point out the manner in which such a creative writer reflects the contradictions of American life today, the manner in which he utters the confusions and prejudices of the class from which he springs? Surely, the rows over Thornton Wilder, Diego Rivera, Archibald MacLeish and *Black Fury* would never have arisen if only personal, individual, accidental eccentricities had been involved, if there were not a clash of social viewpoints.

The Marxist critic not only may but *must* interpret the image; and and if he is a real Marxist critic he can give that correct evaluation of important literature which is possible only from the viewpoint of the revolutionary proletariat with "its supreme devotion to the cause of democracy and its ability to struggle against the limitations and inconsistencies of bourgeois democracy."

Urbane and Plausible

America has no Lenins, but neither has it Tolstoys. Heaven knows there are bad critics. Shall we therefore abolish criticism? There are bad poets, too; why not abolish poetry? There are bad novelists; why not abolish the novel? There are quacks; why not abolish medicine? There are many, far too many, evil men; why not exterminate mankind?

Rhetorical questions. No one attacks criticism as such. On the contrary, the anti-Marxist critic occupies an honored place in conventional literature. He enjoys the full benefits of the Bill of Rights in slinging brickbats at straw men whom he calls "proletarian writers." Recently the venerable H. L. Mencken celebrated the tenth anniversary of a leading literary gazette by "illuminating" what he called "the abyss" of proletarian literature. He fired all the stale epithets left over from his civil war with the Babbittry of which he is a learned and distinguished member and with which he has concluded a peace without victory. Here are some of the Baltimore Sage's "illuminating" observations:

1. Proletarian literature in this county has not produced "anything of shining virtue." So much for *Stevedore, Waiting for Lefty, The Black Pit, They Shall Not Die, The Shadow Before, You Can't Sleep Here, To Make My Bread, Jews Without Money, The Executioner Waits, Those*

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Who Perish, The Land of Plenty, The Last Pioneers,—the poems of Fearing, Hayes, Rolfe, Funaroff, Kreymborg, Schneider, Gessner.

2. Radicals "love money above the common." From an ascetic idealist who has starved all his life for the sake of sublime and selfless principles, this is a just accusation. Observe the vast fortunes paid to editors and contributors by the *New Masses, New Theatre, Dynamo, Partisan Review* as compared with the miserable little checks handed out by *The Mercury*, the *Baltimore Sun, Vanity Fair, Fortune* and the *Satevepost.* You will find the proletarian writers wallowing in luxury while the conservative writers starve in Union Square. Or have it the other way: proletarian writers love money but haven't got it; conservative writers have money but do not love it. Who says the Marxists are vulgar materialists? The literary reaction. And who discusses important ideas by referring to money? Ditto.

3. The *New Masses* is "one of the dullest sheets ever heard of"; there "is no more gaiety in it than you will find in the proceedings of the Lake Mohonk Conference." That is why the literati fell over each other trying to discover the identity of the unusually humorous Robert Forsythe, weekly *New Masses* contributor.

4. Many of the proletarian writers bear "distinguished albeit largely *bogus* Anglo-Saxon names." *Abe Jones has taken the name of "Alfred" by violence, rape and theft!* Moreover, proletarian literature "seems to be a bad translation from the Yiddish"; it is writetn in "shaky English." Let native, nordic one houndred percent Americans like Kenneth Fearing, Josephine Herbst, Erskine Caldwell, Meridel Le Sueur, Horace Gregory, James Farrell, William Rollins, Henry Hart, Malcolm Cowley,John Hermann, and Robert Cantwell speak for themselves. No Jew, unless he utters the bourgeois shibboleths, will convince the anti-semite that he is an American or that he can write English as well as Theodore Dreiser. In poetry, as in politics, the reaction will continue to manipulate the false image *Communist-alien-Jew.*

5. Most of the revolutionary writers "have failure written all over them, and are engaged in saving the proletariat only as a surrogate for doing something for themselves." Good examples of this profound observation are John Howard Lawson, Clifford Odets, John Wexley, John Dos Passos, Samuel Ornitz, Langston Hughes, Malcolm Cowley, Waldo Frank and Robert Forsythe. The Baltimore Sage finds that "the so-called critics of the so-called revolution are even more plainly inferiorities. Nearly all began on higher levels, trying to do something for themselves." Noteworthy among these self-seekers are Joshua Kunitz, Oakley Johnson and Granville Hicks, all fired from university posts, despite their excellent academic standing, for practicing the "liberation of the lowly."

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6. The "norm" among Marxist critics is "an apostate from more urbane and plausible ideas, and he commonly carries with him the rancor of one who found them unbearably complex and onerous; so he turns to the childish simplicities that are the essence of all quackery." H. L. Mencken's ideas on syphilis, beer, the booboisie, the Star Spangled Banner, Methodist ministers, and the Superman are unbearably complex and onerous. The words of Marx, Engels and Lenin are childishly simple quackery. To abandon Mencken for Marx makes you not only an apostate but "a man of the congenitally subordinate and third-rate sort." Again: to disagree with *reactionary* writers is to be full of *rancor*. To say that *revolutionary* writers are mostly people with bogus Anglo-Saxon names who write shaky English that seems a bad translation from the Yiddish, to accuse them of being tools of the Moscow Holy Office, to call them "reporters who see what isn't there," muddle-headed failures who love money above the common—to say this is to be *free of rancor*. This is *urbane* and *plausible*.

7. Proletarian literature was discovered "probably not more than two or three years ago." So much for *The Weavers,* Maxim Gorki, the early works of Jack London and Upton Sinclair, John Reed, Joe Hill, Mayakovsky, Martin Anderson Nexo, Berthold Brecht, Erich Mühsam, Ernst Toller et al.

Does anyone in the bourgeois camp question this kind of "criticism"? Does anyone accuse the Baltimore Soapboxer of being Hitler's paid agent, an artist in uniform? Not at all. Malicious, ignorant, illiterate, anti-semitic slander against revolutionary writers is considered witty and just. No reactionary claims that all criticism is bad. Only Marxist criticism is dangerous for the soul of the "creative" writer,—and only the bourgeois novelist, poet or playwright is really "creative."

When Upton Sinclair was supposed to be socialist, his works were ignored for years. He was compelled to publish many of them at his own expense. The reaction howled that his novels had no style and no humor. Now that he has produced an Epic and spent a sleepless night of ecstasy because President Roosevelt smiled at him, H. L. Mencken discovers he is both a stylist and a humorist. *This* is quackery.

Creator and Critic

But there is the sincere type of creative writer who fears that Marxist criticism wishes to torture his imagination into the procrustian bed of communist formula. He believes the reactionary agitators who assure him that when he supports the proeltariat in its struggle for freedom his writings will have to meet "the specifications of the Moscow Holy Office." He is ignorant of our reiterated assurances that we consider the abstract,

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lifeless, unimaginative, mechanical rewriting of Party theses neither art nor revolutionary; that we judge the writer *artistically* as well as politically.

There, in fact, lies the crux of the matter. The sincere writer who feels discomfort in the presence of Marxist thought believes he is defending *boundless experience* against inflexible logical formulas which narrow experience. But the truth is that such a writer mistakes the circumscribed experience of the middle class for the whole of life. He thinks that the critical picture which the revolutionary writer gives of bourgeois life is a distortion; he believes that the experience of workers and farmers is an *invention* twisted to fit into preconceived formulas. Proletarian life is strange and unreal to him; bourgeois life seems eternal, natural, alone real.

But neither the bourgeois nor the proletarian writer creates out of a vacuum. At the moment when the creative writer sits at his desk and composes his verses or his novel or his play, he may have the illusion that he is writing his work for its own sake, out of profound, unfathomable emotion. But without his past life, without his class education, prejudices and experiences, that particular work would be impossible.

Memory, the Greeks said, is the mother of the muses; and memory feeds not on the general, abstract idea of absolute disembodied experience, but on our action, education and knowledge in our specific social milieu. The writer creates out of an imagination colored, in part, by *ideas,* which he has picked up from the university or factory, from books, from people. Experience without ideas which interpret and color that experience is unthinkable in an advanced society like ours. When the writer does not accept Marxist ideas, he accept bourgeois ideas. Such ideas may be unconscious; the writer may think he writes *only* out of "imagination" and "emotion"; he may fancy himself free of all "preconceptions" and "formulas." But this illusion does not alter the facts. The "preconception" is there—and we get an Abe Jones or a fresco for Rockefeller City.

Art varies with experience; its so-called sanctions vary with experience. The experience of the mass of humanity today is such that social and political themes are more interesting, more significant, more "normal" than the personal themes of the previous decade. Social themes today correspond to the general experience of men, acutely conscious of the violent and basic transformations through which they are living, and which they are helping to bring about. Intellectuals sympathetic to the struggles of the working class (what Mr. Mencken *urbanely* calls "the woes of the Chandala") are themselves victims of the general social-economic crisis. It does not require much imagination to see why they are more interested today in unemployment, strikes, the fight against war and fascism, revolu-

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tion and counter-revolution than in nightingales, the stream of middle-class consciousness, or love in Greenwich Village.

It was not Marxist criticism which compelled this transvaluation of values but *life itself*. Our criticism has only illuminated the abyss of capitalist existence and tested poetic images by that all-pervading, monstrous reality. To attack Marxist critism as a whole is to attack the attempt of reason to interpret symbols. The image is a bridge between reality and emotion. Criticism is a bridge between the image and consciousness. The poet intensifies and illuminates life by image and fable; the critics intensifies awareness by interpreting art in the light of the whole of culture. The critic loves art because he loves life; the poet welcomes criticism because he loves truth. Poet and critic nourish each other as they nourish the culture which nourishes them.

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BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME

And one morning while in the woods I stumbled suddenly upon
the thing,
Stumbled upon it in a grassy clearing guarded by scaly oaks
and elms.
And the sooty details of the scene rose, thrusting themselves
between the world and me . . .

There was a design of white bones slumbering forgottenly upon
a cushion of ashes.
There was a charred stump of a sapling pointing a blunt finger
accusingly at the sky.
There were torn tree limbs, tiny veins of burnt leaves, and a
scorched coil of greasy hemp;
A vacant shoe, an empty tie, a ripped shirt, a lonely hat, and
a pair of trousers stiff with black blood.
And upon the trampled grass were buttons, dead matches,
butt-ends of cigars and cigarettes, peanut shells, a drained
gin-flask, and a whore's lipstick;
Scattered traces of tar, restless arrays of feathers, and the
lingering smell of gasoline.
And through the morning air the sun poured yellow surprise into
the eye sockets of a stony skull . . .
And while I stood my mind was frozen with a cold pity for the
life that was gone.
The ground gripped my feet and my heart was circled by icy
walls of fear—
The sun died in the sky; a night wind muttered in the grass and
fumbled the leaves in the trees; the woods poured forth
the hungry yelping of hounds; the darkness screamed with
thirsty voices; and the witnesses rose and lived:
The dry bones stirred, rattled, lifted, melting themselves into
my bones.
The gray ashes formed flesh firm and black, entering into my
flesh.
The gin-flask passed from mouth to mouth; cigars and cigarettes

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glowed, the whore smeared the lipstick red upon her lips,
And a thousand faces swirled around me, clamoring that my life be burned . . .

And then they had me, stripped me, battering my teeth into my throat till I swallowed my own blood.
My voice was drowned in the roar of their voices, and my black wet body slipped and rolled in their hands as they bound me to the sapling.
And my skin clung to the bubbling hot tar, falling from me in limp patches.
And the down and quills of the white feathers sank into my raw flesh, and I moaned in my agony.
Then my blood was cooled mercifully, cooled by a baptism of gasoline.
And in a blaze of red I leaped to the sky as pain rose like water, boiling my limbs.
Panting, begging I clutched child-like, clutched to the hot sides of death.
Now I am dry bones and my face a stony skull staring in yellow surprise at the sun . . .

RICHARD WRIGHT

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THREE MEXICAN STORIES

(*Translated by* LANGSTON HUGHES)

HOME

Jose Mancisidor

THE GROUP STOPPED QUIETLY in the middle of the international bridge like a herd of cattle in a corral. One of the men turned his head and stood looking back at the distant houses on the American side. Then he said to one of his companions, "Sure, Tony, I'll write you."

The one he spoke to hesitated a moment. Then he answered, "Don't forget—If there's any chance of working in Mexico, I'll come down home where you are. Here, it's bad. Getting worse and worse every day."

His eyes sought those of his friend, which remained insistently fixed on an unknown point that seemed to attract him against his will. Then Tony repeated, "Let me know as soon as you get there. They are going to put all us Mexicans out of here by and by. There's no room for so many."

The children stood at a distance away from the conversation. Their chatter, like the cackling of hens, came out with less difficulty, simpler, flavored with childish ingenuousness. But their eyes too kept turning obstinately backwards as if they had forgotten something in the city they were leaving behind.

Over their tousled heads the sky shone brightly. Little by little the shadows of evening began to fall, gliding over everything. It was as if a thin gas came down from the sky and silently covered people and things. From the half-dead river, in the vagueness of the twilight, other shadows seemed to rise, expand, and take form with strange vigor. The lights of the evening began their restless blinking, all around.

Tony held out his hand and said, "I have to go back now. Tonight we'll be less. You and your family make fifty from our neighborhood, all gone home."

He stopped short. The word "home" made him think of strange things in the back of his mind. Scenes of other days passed before him in swift succession.

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"Our country," Juan muttered. "What will it be like down there? "I don't know if I'll get used to it again. I won't have any friends—but it's worse not having anything to eat! . . . Good-bye, Tony," he said. "Tell all the others good-bye tonight."

His wife repeated, like an echo, "Tell all the others good-bye."

Juan, seeking out his children with a look, said, "Say good-bye to Tony, boys."

Again Tony held out his hand, grasped with affection. For everyone he had a word of courage and a phrase of hope. He stood a moment looking at those who were going into that other land, Mexico, that at the end of the bridge became a separate geographical section with a different name.

The footsteps of Juan and his family, beating an uneven rhythm on the bridge, echoed in Tony's heart. All around him the lights spread out in a twinkling circle, as the vague silhouettes of his friends were lost in the shadows of the night like the outlines of a dream. The last thing he saw of them was their friendly hands waving affectionate farewell.

Although his difficulties were many, Juan kept up hope. Perhaps it was merely bureaucratic slowness that made complex that which in reality should be arranged with ease, without complications—for official machinery had tangled up everything in a tiresome snarl of absurd red tape. His rustic brain refused to accept so many formulas. He couldn't see why one's country put such a mountain of obstacles in the paths of those who had come back home. Nevertheless, he and his family, carried along by the attractions of the unknown, travelled optimistically from the border into the heart of the land that in former times, they had left behind them.

Mexico! The stations followed one after another in a kind of enervating calm. Later came the desert. Arid, dry, without vegetation. Life giving evidence of itself only through the whistle of the engine or the unexpected appearance of aggressive coyotes.

Then again, little by little, the stations became more frequent. The stops less long. Juan and his family did not sleep, anxious to gather into their eyes all the forgotten landscape.

"Say, old woman, here's the station where we first took the train, do you remember?"

She waited until the sharp whistles ceased before she ans-

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wered, "Gonzales Junction! Sure I remember it." Then she put her sleepy eyes up to the window glass, misty with the breath of night, and was silent with her meagre thoughts.

From there, in days long past, they had gone forth toward the secrets of a new life full of promises of abundance. Now they were coming back with their lives in a broken frame of misery. Nevertheless, at heart, she had an obstinate hope in home, in her country.

Before their eyes now in the dawn, passed the green of unending plains bordered by the monotonous grey of the abrupt sierras. Every station, like an anthill, swarmed with people. Farther on, above the high peaks, yellow streaks announced the return of the sun. The train kept up its crazy race down the parallel highway. The rails disappeared rapidly beneath the wheels only to appear anew in front—a prolongation without end!

The repatriated ones were tireless. Sleepless eyes were kodaks anxious to catch marvellous visions of their *patria.* When their ears heard the voice of the conductor announcing the end of the day's run they thought they had passed through the new beauties of a pleasant dream.

Luminous dots stood out in the dark curve of the sky. The transparent evening permitted one to see clearly the high bell-towers whose slenderness penetrated the clean blue twilight.

The train stopped slowly. From the platform strange voices came up to them—but only Juan alone did not know what to do in the tangle of the night. He watched the other passengers get out, received with open arms by those who awaited them, while in his own heart, cold as a tomb, their smiles turned into gestures of irony.

Now three months have gone by since his return to the *patria.* New groups of repatriates have been added to those already brought in. At home, the "old woman" waits with uncertainty the expected news. The papers cry daily: AID THOSE WHO HAVE COME BACK TO MEXICO! And this slogan helps sustain their illusions. But when Juan again gives utterance to the dismal weight of their poverty and helpnessness, a deep silence falls upon them like a mortal anguish.

Into the sad hut from the city street comes the noise of the passing hours. The youngsters come in, too, but no shouts of joy come with them as they drop into their parents' hands the shameful crumbs of beggary. Suddenly in Juan's eyes a bloody

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vision passes. Meanwhile, his wife remembers sadly the foreign city where they lived; her friends there; their hours of struggle; now their sorry return, and this final defeat. Her mouth utters a curse and on her thin cheek there trembles a helpless tear.

Then the darkness covers their defeated bodies. In the dead of night the red vision passes again in front of Juan's eyes, and he closes them tightly in anguish. His wife adds the last touch of desperation, "If only there was a little hope. . . ."

He does not answer for, in his mind worn by weariness, the red vision has taken possession.

Back in the States, as usual one night, Tony was reading aloud from the local Mexican paper. The men listened intently. In his mouth the official measures taken by the *patria* to help those who had come back home took on great importance. Moving and familiar scenes began to live again in every mind. Forgotten childhoods galloped through their heads. Contentment shone in their faces with a persuasive force. But suddenly Tony's throat vibrated with a profane word.

An indefinable fear came into the eyes of his listeners. Tony's voice broke. His tongue could not utter the brutal news. But there the paragraph was, clear and complete, and of a starkness that broke the heart.

Strangely enough, on the same page with the news of parties and fiestas, the paper said that Juan Ramirez, crazed with hunger and despair, had assassinated his "old woman" and their boys.

Nothing more. No comment. No poetry. A simple notice, without adornment, sent for its meager news value from the frontiers of the *patria*.

Tony was struck dumb, overcome by the fact. In his ears he could still hear their friendly voices of farewell, and before his staring eyes affectionate hands reached toward his in a last goodbye.

Then, with hatred, his eyes saw the sky that curved in over their country. And he seemed to see beneath this same sky, stuck in the freshly turned earth, a group of rickety, miserable crosses.

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CRY OF WARNING

Francisco Rojas Gonzalez

THE PIT WAS deep and dark. Like a gigantic mouth opening in a black, eternal yawn, throwing up against the blue sky its foul breath, it waited lazily, sucking in the human hive that milled about its edges every morning.

Down the cold damp throat leading perpendicularly into the belly of the mine, there ran a slender thread of a ladder by which the men descended, on their way to drill in the hard rock, to follow with the anxiety of moles the load of gold in the stratum of a curiously wandering earth formation.

In the spring time, when the fat face of the globe is not big enough for our comrade sun to drench with its Marxian gift of light, it creates for the men in the depths another of its miracles: a sheaf of rays that glances off the muddy walls of the gigantic throat to pierce that chaos in which the miners hide the delights of their poverty. Then the workers throw down their picks and their drills to look up, high up, three hundred meters, and see the disk of the sun that winks at them; but it is so far away that some take it playfully for a gold piece.

Then they go on with their task. They draw together in a bunch until they form a palpitating mass, working, working like a nest of worms boring into a corpse.

The following dialogue comes out in spurts, impelled by the uneven jumping of two pairs of lungs swollen with silicosis—or, in simpler terms, by the digging of other miners—those untiring miners discovered by the exact eye of Dr. Koch.

"They claim the lode runs along here. . . ."

"The lode! . . . Pull back your lantern, will you, I'm suffocating with heat. . . . Heat and sweat. . . . Say, listen, man, did you ever think about a river of sweat? What a river they could make out of workers' sweat, eh?"

And the rhythm of their digging, syncopated by the blow of steel on rock, is caught up by an echo and thrown furiously against the stony wall.

At last—an "at last" a long time off—eight hours—the

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men stretch out their arms cross-like in disconnected jerky gestures, the same as a weary jackass scratches its back on the hot sand, trying to find a decent place to rest. Then, as though pouring out of the doors of hell, a luminous procession winds upward from the belly of the mine. They are coming back to earth after tearing from the rock that transmutable metal which, at the first touch of light, becomes a trumps of the seven major sins. Their murmur, half-hearted at first, grows persistently, steadily, until it turns into a single long lament, unending, knotted in a maze of dull notes.

Hundreds of Mexican voices mingle in chorus, repeating together a prayer, lifting up their *alabado,* a nightly chant that is more than the giving of thanks—a useless complaint, a fictitious sedative, a ballast on the way up, a moan of decay, a supplication. . . .

But this song of resignation does not rise of itself, it stays down, winding like fire-damp, curling around the little sharp stones that jut out beneath the earth for no other reason than to wound with their pointed edges the naked feet of the miners.

This absurd prayer, in order to get to the surface at all, has to knot itself about the necks of the men. Then they drag it behind them, as if they did not already have enough to carry on their shoulders.

When the first footsteps touch the bottom rung, the ladder becomes suddenly tense as these human beings begin to climb and climb without ceasing to pray, leaving behind a part of themselves, like a payment on a bill they cannot escape.

But suddenly their chant of grief and death is pierced by a cry of warning, "Watch out for the pick!"

And the man from whose hands the tool has fallen looks down. The whole ladder is lighted by the anemic flames of little lanterns of gas tied to the belts of a hundred workers climbing up the shaft. At the cry of warning, the long worm of light contorts like a whip.

"Watch out for the hammer!"

"Watch out for the lantern!"

"Watch out for the shovel."

These phrases resound night after night as though welded to an axle of grief—for in order to avoid tragedy, it is a rule that a warning must be shouted to those who are ascending.

Meanwhile, the first man has reached the mouth of the pit. The prayer has completed its mission—it has achieved the earth.

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It has succeeded in breaking the cruel tranquility of the little city that rests comfortably on the lap of the mountain.

One night—double night in the heart of the mine—the men were coming up as usual with their baggage of weariness and prayer. So far no cry of warning had broken the irritating monotony. The worm of light crept earthward with imposing calm.

Suddenly a man's two hands, cramped from overwork, could no longer support the weight of his body, suspended there on the ladder like a tragic puppet. A terrific yell of fear! Then the required cry of warning fell straight down like a drop of melted metal:

"Watch out for me!"

The worm of light contracted horribly. Some of the men turned their heads to the wall. Others, expressionless, saw his body pass them with the speed of a bullet and go dashing into the bowels of the mine.

Caught in a momentary shiver, the bourgeois city turned over in the white sheets of its bed. Prayer, having reached the earth as an abscess on the lips of the workers, went its way. But in the eardrums of every miner his last warning cry stuck like a wedge.

"Watch out for me!"

GREETINGS, COMRADE

Herman Litz Arzubide

HE HELD OUT a rather dirty hand and said to me gravely, "Greetings, comrade." Then he added, "I got in last night from Panuco, beating my way. I organized the Young Pioneers down there. I'm gonna do the same thing here."

I looked at him in amazement for he was, at the most, only thirteen years old. Through his torn clothes, you could see patches of his brown body. He was extraordinarily serious for his age, and his words held a certainty of conviction such as I had not heard in years. He stood in front of the picture of Lenin that hung on the wall and looked at it a long time. Then he said simply, "I'm going to work." And he went.

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That night he came back accompanied by a group of boys of his own age. He sat them down around a table in the room and, taking out of his pocket a handful of lead type, before the astonished eyes of the kids he distributed it as though he were in a print shop. Then he took the forms and, like an expert, rapidly organized a page of propaganda inviting all boys to join his organization. Another one of the kids carried a bundle of cheap paper under his arm. They cut it to the proper size and, with the aid of a kneeling youngster, in less than an hour they had a pile of leaflets. He divided them up among the boys present, sent them off to various sections of the city, and told them to come back the next day. Then he said, offering me his hand covered with printers ink, "Greetings, comrade." And went away.

The next day, true to the time at which he had told the other boys to come, he arrived followed by a mob . . . forty . . . fifty; and each moment more. They sat down and waited silently with a kind of burning expectation. The boy began to talk. His clean quiet words went deep into the silent eyes of his comrades. I listened, and the years of my own childhood began to course through my veins. The harsh panorama of the past crackled in his accusations; and his voice, shaking the dead dry days, turned my entrails inside out.

On the kids the effect was otherwise. I saw them clench their fists and dig their nails into the flesh, panting with fire in their eyes. When he stopped talking a deep silence filled the room. They were not child faces now, they were eyes looking into human tragedy. The boy went on with his work. He had them name a committee, he gave concrete orders to each who had a commission to perform, he told them not to lose contact with the Central Committee, and he let them go.

A group of party comrades, witnessing these activities, and astonished that the child did not ask for food nor say anything about a place to sleep or how he was to travel, took up a collection among themselves of ten pesos and gave it to him. The boy took the money indifferently and when someone said it was "to buy a pair of overalls," he answered in a matter-of-fact way, "I need to buy paper first for our propaganda. I'm going to Villa Cardel tonight, bumming my way on the Inter-Ocean."

Then he picked up his papers, wrote a few notes on them, shook my hand, and said simply, "Greetings, comrade."

And went away.

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I HAVE INHERITED NO COUNTRY HOUSE

I have inherited no country house
I keep no mistress I never scatter dimes.
You will not find my people's names
Listed or recorded in the New York Times.

Our small catastrophes of life
The sunday editors never print,
My brother crippled in a mine
My sister dying, coughing lint.

A brief notice in some local paper
Is inserted when a dear one dies
I have no ancestors who fought
The English for the seas and merchandise.

The Board of Health records my birth
But not my mother's screams or pain.
My application for relief neglects
The hunger of my heart and brain.

Long forgotten, one with the masses' bones,
A strong man, a mason, in Elizabeth's time,
Broke with his hammer a tax collector's skull.
The land took fire. This ancestor is mine.

ALFRED HAYES

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THEY DO THE SAME IN ENGLAND

Albert Halper

I WENT TO A COMPANY DANCE here in London last night. I took with me a girl who could speak eight languages. "Surely I will be able to get something out of this," I told myself, buckling on my collar preparatory to calling on the young lady. Meaning the local scene, the company dance locale in England, of course. The girl was a German emigre, large, plump and rather pleasant.

"Please come," she had phoned me, begging me to take her. "I want to get your opinion, to see if company dances in England are the same as all over, the same as in America." And, hearing that magic word, *America,* which never fails to stir the heart of one of its natives, especially one who has been away from its "democratic" shores for six or seven months, I said I'd take her. So we went.

The dance was held in the Covent Garden Opera House, a huge old pretentious place which has quite a dash of history behind her. During the opera season it is used for opera, but in the intervals the place serves as a public dance hall or a theater. It is situated up a narrow winding street and has fat old pillars near the door.

As we entered, the German girl and I, we saw a sign in the lobby: "Buy programs, threepence" (six cents) "Each program is numbered, prizes will be given at the lucky draw." Well, this was like good old America; who ever heard of a company dance or a company picnic back in the States without a "draw?" I bought two programs, so that we would have two chances, and we went in.

The interior! Try to imagine the old dance halls on the West Side of Chicago, the bigger ones. Or the Midway Gardens, which was on the South Side. These Chicago ballrooms, which were built about thirty or forty years ago and often drew crowds of three or four thousand couples who writhed across the floors were huge draughty affairs, badly lighted so that one did not look too closely to see the bleak walls, and reminding one, when the crowds were small, of gigantic threshing floors. The Covent Garden, however, has balconies. And what balconies! They perch there like bird-cages, two or three tiers of them, and from their imperial heights the departmental managers with their guests and women could look down upon the plebian domes of the shop boys, girl clerks and other industrial

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under-studies. First of all, let me say that the company running the dance was a big concern, operating a chain of what we would call five-and-ten-cent stores—though they carried merchandise selling up to five shillings (about a dollar and a quarter)—throughout the country. Last year the chain did so much business that it was able to give thirty thousand pounds (about $150,000) to charity. The management of the firm is rather proud of this plumpish figure.

We checked our wraps, my partner and I, and came upon the scene. The entrance through which we emerged led past the bar and out upon a platform, from which a broad winding flight of carpeted stairs led directly to the dance floor. With a fine loud blare, the music came to us, a first-class jazz-band playing in the American style. The band was playing upon a platform in the middle of the floor and its leader was dipping his knees, smiling idiotically and pecking the air with his stick like hundreds of other jazz-band leaders I had seen back in the States. From the band-stand I looked to the floor, which was crowded with couples, and I drew back sharply, hesitating. My partner, dressed in a long, pale green evening gown with a tiara upon the dark mass of her hair, asked me if anything was wrong. It was obvious that there was. I had come in my ordinary suit, my "lounge" suit, as the English call it, and every man my glance rested upon was dressed in a tuxedo or tails. And knowing something already of English "traditions" and "good manners," I had seen I had already pulled a boner. I stood there with antagonism, frowning. "Do you mean to say all of these gentlemen on the floor are stock-boys and clerks?" The German girl smiled, assuring me they were. Well, she ought to know, I told myself. She works in the office as a translator and ought to know her own fellow workers.

"Anyway, you are an American," she said to me, still smiling, taking my arm and leading me downstairs. "They make allowances."

"Yes, but how do they know I'm American?"

"They can tell," she smiled. "You have only to open your mouth."

Anyway, we started dancing. At this point I wish to make the statement that this German girl and I had been having arguments for a long time about the British working class, their temperament and their "loyal" morale. She had already been living in England for eighteen months and so was ahead of me on knowing conditions. Her standard argument was that the impotency of British labor was due to the ingrained politeness (consciously ingrained by the upper class, of course) with which the English people were stamped and trained. And this politeness, primarily instigated by the employers to give "efficient" service, is in reality meant to be carried over from the work-shops to the privates lives of the people; and thus you have their patience and docility.

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An interesting theory. Anyway, as we started dancing, no one looked at me, so I gathered that my lack of a dinner jacket was not a fatal blunder. Or else people were being polite. As we waltzed over the floor, my companion, who was busy nodding to right and left because she knew everybody, said: "If you want to ask me questions, do. You look bewildered. Well, go ahead and ask, I work in the inner office and know a lot about the bosses." She spoke with a thick, German intonation, and her vowels were very broad.

"Well, first of all," I said, "I know too much about England already to believe that your company is paying these boys and girls decent wages. And still the fellows are wearing tuxedos—"

"Rented," she smiled.

"And look at the girls. I'm no judge of silks and satins, but their evening dresses look downright swanky, if I may say so."

A wrinkle appeared upon my partner's brow. "It's sad. I know some of the girls. They save all year for a single dress, a dress which they probably can afford to wear only once a year. You don't know what sacrifices they make, even to come here where the company rents the place for the evening and the tickets are cheap."

I answered that I did, looking at the thin faces and anemic bodies. All the girls seemed to have bony elbows and the fellows had those scholarly looking hollows in their foreheads. We swung along, passing by the band-stand. A young Negro girl with kinky hair, a Harlem accent and eyes which rolled to heaven, was singing to the microphone "Something is wrong with his boo-boo now . . ." while the band-leader, dipping his knees and smiling like a fiend, was shaking a gourd with some buck-shot inside it. I glanced over my partner's shoulder and, coming closer to the other couples, saw indeed that the tuxedos were not perfect fits. Many of the fellows must have felt discomfort under the armpits, for their shoulders were always twitching, and perspiration was pouring from their faces upon their collars. Some of the suits were not rented, of course. In England, where cheap clothes are cheap, almost as cheap as wages, one sees tuxedos advertised in the *Daily Herald,* the Labour paper, for eight dollars, two fittings guaranteed.

At the end of the number my companion led me over to the punch table and introduced me to several of her fellow office workers. You will not believe it when I say that they were as polite and formal as the house of lords. Their politeness was not cold or haughty, just politeness. One or two, catching my American accent, looked as if they wanted to unbend a bit. At that moment the band began to play again. I looked at my companion with a glance which said I wanted to hunt me up a partner; she understood with a smile, and I turned away.

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I picked out a girl in a pale saffron dress, a kid about eighteen years old. She was standing with her hands clasped quietly in front of her, in a corner. She gave me a bright friendly smile when I went up to her, but I danced halfway round the floor before I entered into conversation. I wanted her to get the hang of my American dancing ,and also wanted her to get used to me as a person so that her talk would be free.

"Well, this is a big crowd," I finally opened and then made some comment on the quality of the band.

Her first few answers were centrifugal, that is, working away from the middle towards nothing. She began to take on charm in a few more minutes, however. She told me she liked American movies ("Our own pictures move so slowly!"), liked American slang and thought American men were interesting. "I'd like to pay a visit to the United States," she said, "especially New York and California." After she had asked me all the customary questions about America, I guided the conversation skillfully back to herself.

Drawing out an English working girl, or girls, is simple, if you are friendly and patient. Unaware, they tell you, in a few simple sentences, the story of their lives. I do not mean that they fall upon your neck with a full confession, but if one is patient one will hear things that are astonishing. And all told with frankness, with candid words and quiet honesty. My God, how honest these English girls are. And fine.

After dancing three entire numbers with the girl (I saw the girl I had brought up was dancing with a partner, so I did not trouble myself over her), I knew all one can expect to learn in a single session about how to run a paying English five-and-ten-cent business. In half-humorous, (and do not make the mistake of thinking that the English have no humor)—in half-humorous, half-bitter phrases, answering my queries, the girl told me things, data about herself, her background and her salary.

First of all, she was getting nineteen shillings ($4.75) a week. She had started with seventeen-and-six ($4.40). I did not ask her how she lived. Anyone who has been in London a few months knows the countless gray granite streets lined with monotonous brick houses which have primitive plumbing, no central heating and downright unsanitary lavatory conditions. From the doorways of these homes and rooming houses, every morning, you can see the shop girls emerge. In the fog which seems always to be drifting from the river you can see them hurry to the trams and buses. And transportation in dear old London is not cheap. Transportation is charged by the mile, so if a girl lives three or four miles from her employment, she has to pay six or eight cents for a one-way fare. Food is not cheap either. But the English, with true British tenacity, have tried to solve the matter. Most young men bike to work, also some women. In

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the morning the streets stream with fast-going, hard-peddled bicycles, darting in and out of heavy traffic. As for the eating problem, that too has been somewhat solved: the shop girls and clerks bring their lunches or, if they go out to a tea-room to eat, eat very little. I have been in lunch-rooms during the rush hour where the average order for a shop girl has been a cup of tea and a scone. And I have seen how hungrily they have nibbled, trying to make the food last. Then, with a quick wipe of the lips with their handkerchiefs (for the English serve no napkins), they get up quickly, pay the check and hurry out, not tipping.

Many girls, I learned from my dancing partner, come from the "depressed" areas of the North, where conditions, judged even by American southern mill-town standards, are appalling. These northern villages and cities—industrial centers—have come under the hatchet of the Japanese underselling spurt which has robbed England of many of her far eastern markets. The girls' fathers, most of them, are on the dole, and the daughters are sent to London for employment. Many of them, of course, land upon the streets. Fully half of the girls who have stopped me late at night along Tottenham Court Road I found spoke with a North country dialect. Of course, along Picadilly, where things are swankier, you get a pseudo-Mayfair or a brittle cockney accent.

"Well, where do the type of young men who are dancing here tonight take girls, if they have no money?" I inquired.

My partner gave me a quick look, then said briefly: "To Hampstead Heath." She did not know it, but her eyes were bitter. And again I understood. Hampstead Heath at night, if the weather is not downright frosty, swarms with young couples who stretch themselves upon the chilly ground. In the summer, of course, it is a lovers' paradise. It is not under London County Council supervision and has no policemen, no regulated hours. It is a huge wild place, with trees, bushes and hills and dales, right in the heart of the city.

"Well, that's the way she lives," I told myself. "She comes from some depressed northern mining or industrial town, is thrilled by the city at first, gets a job with a five-and-ten-cent chain, lives in a dark room without heat or running water, and learns to curb her appetite and get along on starvation wages. And perhaps, in time, she gets into trouble . . ."

At the end of the number my German girl friend came over and tapped me on the shoulder. I introduced her to my new friend. We talked awhile, somewhat stiffly, then separated, and my recent partner smiled pensively as my companion and I moved off. My German girl friend, when we were at a distance, spoke: "Now you ask *me* questions, I saw you pestering her long enough."

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At that moment the three cornetists in the band stood up and gave a sad and prolonged blare of the horns. The drummer rolled his sticks, and a man in swallow tails began to shout.

"La-dies and gentle-men," he shouted, until the microphone was suddenly shoved before him. Then, "Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "it is only fitting and proper that at this time, in the midst of such festivities, we should have a word or two from the president of the institution which is running this affair—"

There followed a clapping of hands, of grateful English hands, and my German companion winked quickly at me and pulled me to one side, giving me the history of the master-of-ceremonies. The master-of-ceremonies, a big, heavy looking man jammed in a tight-fitting dress suit and suffering, I take it, from jaundice, judging by the color of his face, had been a "radical" small-time politician, until he had married into the family which ran the chain giving this dance. I found out, subsequently, that many concerns in England have, as their owners or superintendents, men who in the past have dabbled in politics; and always, upon investigating further, I learned that these men had been "radicals" or "progressive liberals." Of course, they carry their "radical"ideas with them into business. They are all for social insurance, modern housing—and low wages. They also are for "socialism." "But we English do things slowly," they will tell you, smiling.

Meanwhile the master-of-ceremonies had introduced a speaker who was getting a great hand from the employees, the president, a gentleman of about forty-five, short, well-built and with pitch-black hair. "Friends," he said, holding up a warm, fraternal palm, for silence, "friends," he said, and then went into a heart-to-heart, sincere, quiet talk about the happy-family business. He spoke on and on, and I knew the words before he said them. ". . . we need you and you need us . . . so that we may pull together . . . friendly cooperation . . ."

The German girl, winking, was grinning at me.

"Yes, it's everywhere the same," I said.

When the president finished, young girls around me clapped their hands and murmured "Lovely, O lovely!" I looked about to see if they had meant it. They had! The one-time radical, the jaundiced fellow who had married into the owners' family, poked his face into the microphone and bawled: "For heee's a joll-y goood fel-low . . . ." and all at once, like a hoarse, trained, yet untrained chorus, the whole mass of people on the floor raised their voices and sang,

"For he's a jolly good fel-low
For he's a jolly good fel-low . . ."

I turned away, going to one side and sitting on a chair. I was

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aroused, however, by a loud microphonic voice announcing the lucky draw. After all, I had paid for two programs. Hurriedly I fished inside my pockets and took them out.

The announcing voice went on, and when I heard the details I was thunderstruck. Two cash prizes were being offered, the first for seven shillings ($1.75), the second for five ($1.25)! Was I dreaming? Incredible! I did some rapid calculus. Here were a thousand couples, and each couple had paid threepence (six cents) for a program. Why, great Scott! the company was working a neat racket on the thing. A thousand programs netted them sixty dollars. Subtract ten dollars (an exorbitant figure) for the cheap printing and still the company was making money. My companion, watching my pencil, was grinning harder than ever.

"Now sit down again and I'll tell you something," she said, and she began to tell me how to profitably run an English five-and-ten-cent store. "First of all, after paying hardly any wages, you must be sure never to draw the veil away from the private lives of your employees," she said, and she began telling me appalling stories of clerks and shops girls who had confided in her and to whom she had given a little money. She herself, being an expert translator and taking care of the foreign correspondence from foreign manufacturers, received four pounds (twenty dollars) a week, perhaps the highest salary on the staff, but her wage was exceptional.

I sat listening while the lucky draw was going on and through the blur of excitement the choppy Germanic words of my companion came to me. Many boys and girls, she told me, after trying to make both ends meet—and failing—start living together to save expenses. "So you see, I'm working with immoral people," she smiled. However, a few years ago, the owners had had a twinge of conscience. The "radical" member, because business was good and expanding, called in social service people, asking for assistance. "We want to help our employees," he told them. "It has come to our notice that some of our girls do not live in very good quarters. We would consider financing and operating hostles for them, at cost; we want them to be comfortable, to have the necessary amenities . . ."

The social service people called in architects, technicians. A series of conferences was held. Plans were drawn, blue-prints and figures scanned. From the inner office a warm wave of good-will-toward-our-employees publicity began to flow. But the wave turned out to be a wavelet, and was stopped abruptly. The whole thing went up in smoke. The lowest, positively the lowest figure for hostle accomodation for girls, was fifteen shillings a week. And the law, in such a case, required some kind of supervision—the girls would have to have matrons or overseers, the girls would have to be in at a certain hour at night—

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Here the management balked. What! Would there be infringement of the girls' freedom—? No, positively—!

A great to-do burst forth.

But the kernel of the core was this: If the girls received only seventeen and a half shilling weekly and paid fifteen for a company supervised room, how could they go on on two and a half shillings for clothes, for tram fare, a midday meal and entertainment? And what about their families in the depressed areas, to whom they occasionally were forced to send money?

"But look," said the social service people, "it costs them fifteen shillings for a room in unsanitary lodging houses now—"

Yes, but— but the girls had their freedom, they did not have to be in at a certain hour at night—

And slowly, slowly the truth began to unfold, the social service people learned what has been known among the poor for a long time—that these wretched girls, two or three times a week, in order to send money home, go out upon the streets . . .

So the plan was dropped, the blue-prints folded up. It was impossible, impossible. The freedom of the girls could not be tampered with. So now no one talks about the hostles any more, only the old hands, a few girls of twenty-five or so. The plans, a brief wavelet from the office let it be known, were not "practical."

However, the firm can ease its conscience by giving money to charity, this year thirty thousand pounds. It's a fine gesture, the employees gasp and gossip and it gets the company in all the papers. People read about it, people who buy— Anyway, it is always better to give away money to charity rather than to raise the salaries of employees. Any man can see the sense in that. Employees are like monkeys, if you raise them once, they'll want more. Besides, the thirty thousand was not a dead loss, it came out of surplus profits. And the income tax returns have a special provision for that . . .

We got our wraps and made our way toward the nearest exit. My companion told me later that my face was getting red. At the door, standing to one side, waiting, was the girl in the saffron dress, her hands clasped quietly in front of her. She glanced wonderingly at my early departure, then, getting over her wonderment, nodded farewell and smiled. But I guess I must still have looked sore, for when I turned around and our eyes met I saw she had stiffened into coldness and hostility, and that her glance, which was defensive, glittered with the pride of the English.

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THE HUNT

Ben Field

"IF IT SAID ON THE agenda whoring and booze, it would be a hell of a lot easier."

Lanky Schneider stopped his pacing. He glared at the punchswollen face, the heavy shoulders, the paws flung like guards over the knees.

Gordon smiled back at him. "Now if it was kicking the lousy system like a football into the coffin corner, I'd be all there. Or if it was swapping punches. But it ain't so simple. The strings are tight. You got to do this that way, and that this way. If the cops arrest a bunch of little comrades with you and beat hell out of them, you got to stand on the sidelines. If you fight, you get hell bawled out of you."

"Why shouldn't you?" Lanky's long nose reared further back from his ragged, worried moustache. "What's the sense in giving them the chance to smash that bullethead of yours? What do you prove by flying off the handle? We've got to have discipline. The party is no party for whoring and boozing. You disappear whenever you damn please. We find you buried in a whore or swilling till the booze drips out of your pants."

"It's hard, Lanky. I come from the other class."

"I'm talking about you. To hell with your class."

"That's what I say. But it's hard to separate me from my class. I'm a fellow with a past. Look at it."

Lanky faughed in disgust. He stared out thru the open window of the Workers Center. The city's tinkering came in on the spring air.

"Look, Lanky. I got the clap when I was 16. I got kicked out of prep school and college. I run off to the wheatfields one summer. I got a job in a lumber camp and got my foot smashed to hell and pruned off. I got shipped back to Pennsylvania, to the National Farm School. There who should come along but a senior with a long nose and misplaced eyebrow to start a strike against corned beef and cabbage. And when

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that sowbelly dean got a gang to beat you up, what could a fellow do but muscle in on the excitement?"

Lanky drummed his fingers on the windowsill. Maybe the strings had been too tight. It might be best to loosen up and let the swashbuckler find himself. This being slashed off suddenly without a cent was still too hard to bear.

Slumped back in his chair, Gordon drawled, "Lanky, what can you expect of a fellow whose fatass father run away with his plant to Pennsylvania? Yeh, if both of us hadn't helped engineer the strike he'd still be frigging his men during work hours and his girls day and night. His guts stink the air. What can you expect of the son of such a son of a bitch?"

"Don't be a baby and go pitying yourself. The Party uses even a pin on the road. You'll feel better about it when you can sit in one place and not shove around like you got oats in your behind. Forget your old man. Why in Russia they had a Prince come over. You're far from being a Prince." And Lanky let himself smile.

Gordon creaked up on his feet. He'd been sponging too long on Lanky. His year's stay in New York no success. No relief because he was single and an out-of-towner. He must find some work in the country.

The two friends eyed each other. Lanky turned to his desk wearily. "Don't forget to write."

Gordon grabbed his shabby gladstone bag and walked out. He thumbed his way out of the city. He bummed his way thru southern Pennsylvania, across the mountains. He got himself a job as hand at the foot of the mountains.

Gordon was the only hired man on the Hendrickson farm. Hendrickson and his big-haunched Mennonite wife were friendly people. Hendrickson considered the depression a cow that had dried up in order finally to come in. He had switched over to voting Democratic in a Republican county. But when Gordon gave him a pamphlet on the Chicago Farm Convention which pointed out that Roosevelt was the same old egg with a tricky shell on it, Hendrickson shrugged his shoulders and read no further.

Gordon was an expert dairyman and could handle a tractor as easily as whipping a top. Evenings after chores he played the harmonica or sang for them. Though there was a swell bar at McFarlane's hotel in town, he kept away from it. He even went to church with the boss family to see how life lumped out

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in this part of the country. The boss took him down to Firkin's postoffice and general store every Saturday night.

One Saturday night the store was packed to the doors. In the middle were rich farmer Jimpson, Plover who was director of the bank which had its hooks in the hill farms, his nephew big Ed Pusley, game warden, and a number of the dairymen. Hendrickson chimed in. Gordon bought a bottle beer and listened.

Plover pinched his foxed beard. "Sure, what Jimpson says about them one-horse farmers all over the country is true. It's true here. We got to face the facts. There's too many people in the country doing things they oughtn'd had. Give the little fellow a chance to sprout up the old way and he'll be spoiling things for himself and everybody."

Gordon put his finger on his collaring bottle beer. "What in hell would you have the little fellow do?" he said.

"Do?" shouted Jimpson. "These fellows ain't bona fidey farmers. When a fellow's got three or four foot ground just enough to stand on to chop down a tree or crack a squirrel, he ain't no farmer. He's a lumberjack or hunter."

Wagons kept clattering across the railroad tracks back of Firkin's store. Then the shadows and shaggy horses of the stone farmers from the hills.

Gordon popped out, "Overcrowded milk market or not, you'll have them all Red talking that way."

"Red!" snorted big Ed Pusley. "All red them hilljacks sees is in their woman's rag or the old hunting cap."

Gordon belched, "Bastards," and moved to the door. A hill girl was getting on a wagon. Her dress caught between her legs. His throat ached suddenly. He hadn't touched a woman since New York.

The men tramped into the store, lean, hard as bull punches. One of them towered above the rest, bronzed like a turkey cock, his worn breeches fanned out at the seat.

Hendrickson was the only one to say in his friendly way, "Sit down, Hub Hone. Give us an earful."

Hub Hone growled, "Don't waste my shot."

"What you saving it for?" asked Plover thru his beard.

"We'll show you one of these days."

After Hub had stalked out, Pusley bit out, "Snotty hound. Acts like they ought to be dynamited out of the woods like thievin' crows."

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"Well," said Plover, "I see that the government's planning buying up this poor farm country, turning it into hunting preserves and parks. They'll send the small fellows up to Alaska to keep cool-tempered."

On their way back to the farm, Hendrickson talked about the Hones. The old man laid up feeble, had been buffaloed into signing up the hog-reduction, had to sell his famous guns. Though old Hone couldn't afford to pay for a hunting license, he had a picture of Coolidge in a 20-gallon hat in his bedroom and swore he would take no help from any Democratic government even if it was a golden scoop.

Late that night Gordon wrote Lanky. And the letter from Lanky read here was the chance. Here was the class line which had been furrowed in American earth with the first bull plow of the colonists. Gordon must keep in touch with the hill fellows. He must keep on writing reports which would be printed in the paper as farmer correspondence. Here was a chance to become a good farm organizer—in football lingo, a triple threat man—a good fighter, writer, speaker.

Gordon muttered, "Oh, you school ma'am, you long drink of water." He took fire. He saw himself shoulder to shoulder with Hone. Then everything turned to ash. He became restless, couldn't put any pep into his work. He lay in bed after evening chores cursing that old bastard, his father, having his chicken every night. Then he jumped up cursing himself for a louse for yearning for money which could be sent to substitute while he loafed on the bench. He lunged into the night and found his way down to McFarlane's.

II

Dinny McFarlane kept the smaller hotel, kept hunting dogs to stud, and sold cornwhiskey from the hills on the sly. In a room behind the bar called the shooting gallery a couple of caly pigeons had nested in the old days. They had become so riddled and business so poor that they had cleared out and gone elsewhere. Of all the town storekeepers McFarlane was the only true friend of the hillsmen.

First visit to McFarlane Gordon drank carefully. Second visit he met Hub and old Hone. The old man, bleary-eyed and sick, with veins like guts heaped on his slipping hands. Gordon treated them to drinks. The old man had dragged down

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to sell his famous 16-gauge Damascus twist. "We's poor as piss on a rock. Jesus, who'd a thought I'd ever sell."

The long-barreled shone like a knife just off the stone. It had been hammered out of horseshoe nails and was over 100 years old. Old Hone had replaced the firepin with a hammer.

Gordon bought the beauty, sealing the bargain with a jug of corn. The Hones invited sim to come up to their farm. There were more game wardens in the woods than game, but they could scare up something, license or no license.

Gordon laughed. "Scare up a woman? My spigot's dried hot."

Hub said there was a big strapping girl in the family, had a mind all her own.

When Lanky learned about the gun, he wrote, "What in hell are you wasting your money for? Whom are you going to shoot up, wild Indian? The gun is the end of this stage of organization, not the beginning."

Gordon felt he was on the right road. The buying of the gun had made the Hones friendlier. He could go hunting, see what was doing up in the hills. The gun would give him the chance to develop into a good shot. He spent evenings and Sundays shooting at bullseyes.

Fall soon slid around, and he had not as yet gone up to the Hones. He heard the old man was down in bed again. Hub didn't show up at the McFarlane's. There was trouble up at Halleck Point for the Saddler brothers had been arrested for bagging deer without hunting licenses. Big Ed Pusley had been shot at from the bushes several times.

Gordon was getting soured on the town. McFarlane's was the only place he could stand. At the beginning he had visited the churches. He had watched the girls with their laced breasts and little asses he could close one hand over. He had accepted an invitation to chicken dinner with a Sunday school superintendent. It wasn't repeated after he had discussed politics. He had rounded up some of the boys thinking he might help them with their football team. The boys shied away from him.

And then the Saturday after Thanksgiving, Gordon felt so goddamned restless, he asked Hendrickson for the week end off. Hendrickson told him to go ahead, but he could let him have the truck only for a day because of the milk. Gordon drove over to the hotel. He would get the road up to the Hone farm. He bought three bottles of Golden Cock. He tore across the

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street in the opposite direction and drank while he drove. Late at night he crossed the river into Harrisburg and spotted in the shadows of a side street a girl who whistled back to him. He would have had her in the truck. She brought him to her room. When Gordon awoke midafternoon Sunday, the girl was dressed, reading the funny sheets. She was rangy, with poor teeth, and flat pale cheeks. Came from Scranton, daughter of a miner. Gordon reached out and pulled her to him. He couldn't remember whether she had gotten the kick out of it too. When he got up late in the evening, the feeling of elation burst swiftly like a bubble. He avoided the big eyes of the girl. All the way back to the farm, slumped over the wheel, he felt weary, a dull vague ache in his very guts.

Hendrickson hemmed, "Blowout? Well, you went far from home to kill your sheep. Won't be able to let out the truck again."

Gordon felt like hell. He couldn't even answer Lanky's letter which didn't scold him any longer for boozing and pricking between two classes, but which said that he felt he was getting more out of the correspondence than Gordon. Maybe it took a woman to do things with him. Anyway, life would inevitably teach Gordon more than 10,000 letters, and could he send to New York more information about the Hones and the others?

Gordon got himself wild western stories and stayed up late drinking and reading. It was only after battling around with himself for days that he decided to stick it out a couple months more. By midwinter, he would have enough saved to keep him free for some time. He had been able to buy clothes and feed his gut. He might be able to get a car. He couldn't forget his old high-powered Buick. A car gave a fellow wings, would slacken the strings from New York which seemed to have grown into him, become part of his veins, nerves, blood. He could get to California or the Dakotas where the pitchfork was growing. And he could remember too well the little Mexican field worker in Brawley, her hard padded hands, how she smelled of sweat and cheap perfume crushed under you.

And then one afternoon in December, he drove to town to get a load of feed. He bought himself beer at Firkin's, and stood near the door watching the high school girls sailing down the street. From the other direction a bunch of the hill farmers

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trooped up from the hotel. Hub Hone led them. Old Hone swung open the door shaking a big loose smoked-looking fist.

Saddler shouted hoarsely, "Firkin reports Hub to the government. Had a 400-pound stag, last hog in the pen, and Hub sold it without paying no tax. So Firkin reports. We got hog wardens now too."

The little red headed postmaster came out, a haylouse of a man getting into everybody's hide. He waved a letter from the office of the internal revenue. "I'm adoing my duty. It says: It has come to the attention of this office that there are numerous violations in regard to the hog processing tax law and this office wishes your cooperation in transmitting information as to such violations that come to your attention."

"Spy pigeon," roared the farmers.

Old Hone hacked out, "He's only a huckleberry in a hog's ass. It's that Rosyvelt behind him. If I had a barrel stave, I'd get to him. Will his hide sell for more than ours that he's lording it over on us? He's adriving us, that godly guy, even how to cut our women."

Firkin barked out, "I'm adoing my duty." And he whipped back behind a counter. A rotten apple whizzed across the store and burst in his face. He grabbed a huge cleaver and swung it at them. Gordon made a leap for him. The farmers surged forward, backed out, and carried both of them out with them. Firkin slipped from under them and trotted down the icy street. Gordon burst after him. Old Hone was lying on the ice with his legs spread out like the shaft of a wagon. Mrs. Firkin, a cheese pumpkin of a woman, cracked open yelling for help.

Hub walked toward the postmaster with one hand out.

Firkin swung the cleaver over his head.

Gordon moved behind a tree, measured the distance to the little man who kept backing away from Hub, and kicked. He caught him in the wrist. The cleaver flew off across the street. The postmaster dropped to his knees. He rode his arm blurting and swivelling fiercely on the ice.

The farmers came up lugging old Hone. Hub said, "Better come along with us." Gordon shook his head. He walked to the truck. He drove to the farm.

All the rest of the day and next morning Gordon felt as though a load had been slashed off his back. He grinned down at his wooden foot, "Come in handy, heh, old boy?"

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Right after dinner he went to his room. He took out his harmonica. A knock at the door.

Hendrickson looked around the room. "Somebody just called me by phone. Didn't know anything about it. Firkin's wrist is splintered up. The bones like a meadowlark's."

He closed the door. "I ain't got much use for Firkin myself. Why in hell did you take sides? Hub's all right, but those fellows up there'll kill a man quick as spitting. Last year Hub half killed Ed Pusley who nabbed him suckering out of season. Threw him down, said he'd make a sucker out of him. 'Hell, with the law. It's been screwing us too long."

Gordon got up and tightened his belt.

"Talked it over with the missus. You're one of the best hired men we've had. But there's going to be trouble. They'll come down here. I'm paying you off. No hard feelings."

"Hell with you." Gordon hurled his stuff into his bag, put shells into his gun. He refused to let Hendrickson drive him to the edge of town. He tramped down to town and into the postoffice. He stuffed a letter for him into his pocket and sent a card to Lanky. No one inside but Mrs. Firkin and the clerk. The fat woman began heaving as if some one were pumping out her stomach. He bowed, "Morning ma'am. Tell Firkin I'm in town if he wants surgery done on his wrist."

He walked over to the hotel. McFarlane was sprawled over the bar, snoot between paws like a hibernating bear. "So they ain't pitchforked ye out yet?"

Gordon drank and laughed. "Let them try." He finished the bottle and looked at his watch. There was a late afternoon train. He ordered another bottle.

A big boy stamped into the bar. He was hippy with black greasy hands like steering knuckles. Went over to the pretzel bowl, fished himself pretzels, and backed out, staring at Gordon.

Gordon worked on the second bottle.

McFarlane walked over to the door. He walked back and clutched him by the arm. "Say, I got a swell stag's head upstairs, twelve points." Gordon stumbled after him up to a back bedroom. McFarlane slipped out and banged the door shut. Gordon leaped after him and pounded the door with his fists. He opened the windows. He couldn't risk the jump.

He walked around the room, then flung himself on the bed with his sleek Damascus. He finished the second bottle. The last train was leaving the station hooting. A door flung open,

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the tramping of many men, and then as if at the end of a tunnel, Pusley bawling, "Where in hell's that Jew, cut one way." Glasses shattered. A shot. Gordon hurled himself out of bed. He stumbled and crashed on the floor.

It was dark as a pocket when he woke. His head felt as if there were an axe in it. He yanked on the light. His gun and bag were on the bed. There was a plate of ham sandwiches and another bottle. Well, McFarlane had to keep his nose clean.

He lay down rubbing his head. A shot of pain thru his big toe flung him up. The old trick. It was his wooden foot. And for a second the face of his dead confused mother, hanging over him in the hospital, flashed before him like powder. And now that free fatass having every night light-footed girls young enough to be his daughters. Gordon wiped his mouth and cursed.

Lanky and he had fixed him up during the strike, had him by the crotch. Lanky bringing in farmers to the picket line. Gordon on the line with a football helmet and camphor for tear gas. A deputy had splintered the artificial foot with a shot from the roof of the plant. Gordon had unstrapped it and shouldered it on the line. His picture, carrying the foot, had appeared in newspapers all over the country. This had helped win the strike. This had helped his father get rid of him.

He reached for the bottle, clicked it to his foot, laughing. He searched for the last letter from Lanky. Lanky wrote that there would be no great problems getting the Hones and the others started here. You could get them together on the simplest grievance. In Minnesota farmers had gotten together on fighting the dog tax and hunting licenses. What steps was Gordon taking?

Gordon felt suddenly as if he had been hurled into the open and an iron door bolted fast behind him. He got up and stamped about the room. He doused his face in the basin. He couldn't get the fever out. Even the whiskey hung like a knife in his chest.

He leaned against the window and watched the dawn cracking over the mountains. Couldn't run off without seeing how the Hones were making out. Couldn't face Lanky empty-handed. He would shoot a couple pheasants. That would stuff Lanky's mouth. Tramping the hills all day with a gun would stir up his guts. Remembering the girl on the wagon, Gordon bawled like a rutting bull, "Heads up, tails up." He marched downstairs.

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III

McFarlane drove Gordon up the hill road before the town stirred to life. He was worried. Yesterday they had smashed half his glasses in the bar, jawed of cleaning out the hills. Gordon looked at him and realized McFarlane in town could help a lot with the work.

Six miles up a wagon track sliced the road. Gordon got out, shouldered his gun, and cut up the wagon track. The fields were bare and ribbed with snow, stubble, rock. When he reached the farmhouse after a long tramp, the little sunlight fired over the hills was gone. It had turned bitter cold.

He knocked, finally pushed in. Found himself in a long kitchen full of smoke, sharp smells, and children. A woman hurried from the other room, a baby saddled on her belly. A small turkey hen of a woman with her dress torn in back as if from heavy treading. "Hub's tending to the sick horse with Nettie. L'l be in soon. Maybe Pa'll talk."

One of the boys dashed barefooted out to the barn. The old gobbler lay in the next room under a pile of horse blankets. There was an old-fashioned cackstool in the corner with a pan, filth floating around like boats. The children played near it.

Hone blinked leaky eyes. "Shoo, the kicker." He fumbled with his swollen hand. "So, they got us in the bullrushes, fast."

No furniture but bed and stool. The yellow walls were covered with pictures of Coolidge and Lincoln. Lincoln with a big wart, and the other with a wart-face.

The old man gasped, "Nettie's been reading the papers to me. It's something to scratch the devil out. There was the war. A Democrat Wilson fired that. There was Teddy killed, younger than Hub. Belly shot out and spread like a frog in a French lot. And now this Democrat Rosyvelt . . ."

Gordon looked at the door desperately. He walked over to the window and let the cold air paw his face while the old man droned on. At last Hub tramped inside blowing.

Hub's face had grown harder. He shook hands. His hands were bloody. One of the horses with the blind staggers and they were bleeding a vein.

Gordon said, "I came. I came to cop couple pheasants."

"Sure, we got to git some meat ourselves. The old man's

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sickness drove us down to nothing. Have to eat the cookstove soon."

A tall dark girl with the broad hips your whole body ached to stroke stood at the door. The old man heaved up. She flashed past to help him at the stool. They heard the old man's thunder as they went thru the kitchen.

Hub stopped in a broken shed to piss. Gordon's words lumped out of his mouth as he told about the gang at McFarlane's. Hub snorted, "If Pusley and the rest ain't careful, we'll be down on them first." He looked at Gordon as if he were waiting for more. Gordon said nothing. Hub buttoned up and went ahead.

The iron sky hung low. The wind cut across like a knife-bar. Gordon braced his shoulders and gulped the strong air. They walked abreast. In a clearing burdocks. Hub picked at the snow. Fresh cock pheasant droppings. "Hard winter all right if they got to hammer burdock balls. Not half so hard as 'twas for us. Been living on squirrel."

The dark brooding Hub trudged ahead tracking the cock. They moved up to a patch of briers. A cackle and explosion. Gordon swung his Damascus too late. Hub's rifle cracked with a sound as if he had smashed into an empty bushel basket. The cock curved its tail and then coasted clear into the woods again.

Hub raised his rifle as if he were going to break it in two on his knee. He rushed ahead. They needlethreaded over the edge of a bank. The snow came up to their bellies, stabbing thru their pants. They beat about. All they found in the end were a few bloody feathers.

Hub's buck teeth flared in his dark face. "Need a shotgun for pheasants. We sold everyone one of our good guns. They got the hunting license on, and you ain't supposed to hunt even a louse except it's in season and you got the tag. There was hunting and traplines so a fellow could get a living. That was before Ted and me was took to war. But down in the valley all the trenches they ever seen is under a skirt. Jimpson's boy wasn't took, Ed Pusley got away with it."

Gordon said, "The bastards." Hub looked at him. All that Gordon said again was, "Bastards."

Hub spat bitterly. They filed down a hard cowpath. Hub told how he had shot silver fox. Last snowshoe rabbit killed in this part of the country was his—ears steel gray, long hair to

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the gambel joint, and the belly whiter than a woman's. Hub turned round, his eyes, softening for a second.

Gordon shifted his gun and looked away.

They clambered over a stone fence into a pasture. A line of hickories on the north side. Hub pointed to arrowhead tracks. He crouched. His gun flew up. A crack like two billiard balls kissing. The squirrel fell down heavy as rotten-ripe fruit. It flashed up and down, flung out its tail, its paws out prayerfully. Hub grabbed it by the tail and batted the brains out on a stone. He stuffed it into his pocket.

They tramped a long time about before spotting another. A gray dog squirrel which scooted up a chokecherry tree. Gordon circled slowly. The squirrel kept the tree between them. Gordon feinted and let go. The squirrel held on with a paw, then flowed down and dropped in a heap. They jumped for it. It flew between their legs into the stone fence.

Hub dropped down and tore at the stones. The stones were frozen fast. The ice ripped his hands. They got hold of a fencepost and eased the stones out. Their faces fired up in the wind.

They made a gap in the fence. Hub crawled on his knees, sniffing and puffing. He made a sudden dive and threw the squirrel. The squirrel landed in the snow, raced up a wild apple and disappeared in the knothole.

They shoved a stick inside. The squirrel chittered and squealed. They put leaves inside. The leaves smoked stingily. They spent their last match. They could not dislodge the squirrel.

Hub plodded crosslots to the nearest farmhouse for an axe. Gordon stood guard near the knothole. Hub came back with the axe and chopped at the tree. The chips fired back at them. The wind softened a little. Snow sifted down slowly, and then in a wild rush as if geese had been plugged overhead.

They spotted the squirrel coiled up with one paw shoved up towards the heart of the tree. Hub dropped his axe and poked his hand into the knothole. There was a click. A harsh voice bawled out, "Hands out, you tramps, or we give you an extra asshole each."

They jerked from the tree. A man loomed out of the snow almost on top of them. The wind tore at the snow. It was Ed Pusley with his gun.

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There were others of the town men around because he started yelling, "The Jew boy too." Hub had dropped suddenly and grabbed his axe. Pusley bawled, "Drop that axe. Drop it. We pay you back for shooting that cock, we pay you back for Firkin."

Hub raised the axe slowly and moved towards Pusley. Pusley stepped back and tightened hold on his gun, growling. Gordon stared at the underslung jaw and the beading eyes. Hub took another step forward. Desperately Gordon tore out, "Where's the dog?" And then before Hub could answer, he roared, "Get him, boy, sick him."

Pusley twisted his head for a second. And then Gordon leaped. His head caught Pusley like a cannonball. The gun banged out of his hands. Gordon kicked around in the snow. He got on his knees. Pusley lay in the snow like a log. Hub stood over them with his gun.

Gordon got up. His hat had been knocked off. He put his hand to his head. It was bloody. The gun must have gotten him. A shot came faintly on the wind. Hub hurried to the knothole. The squirrel was gone. He stalked over and kicked Pusley. "Git out of here or we'll sick that hound on you." The breath snored thru Pusley's open mouth. He staggered to his feet and made for the woods.

The gash in the forehead bled into Gordon's eyes. He packed snow and plastered it on his head. Hub waited and kept lookout with his gun. The snow chalked the woods. The wind flared again. There was no sound of men. They cut around in the opposite direction. The trees groaning and standing out like great quills. They came to a small farmhouse huddled against the storm.

Curley Flynn, twisted like a scythe handle, flung open the door for them. Hub talked and skinned the brained squirrel. Curley stomped around cursing and beating one fist against the other. He gave Gordon some corn whiskey. A young woman with a piece of leather and a harness needle listened near the cook-stove and then went into the other room.

Curley couldn't sit down. "We got to make a finish of this. Their hunting license, their tax on every hog's bristle and spear of grass, they just going to squeeze us between stump and stone. They won't let us sell the few squirts of milk we make. Old Jimpson's in with the dealer. I tell you I been down in Cameron North Carolina where we was bad off we had to steal in the

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dead of night our own tobacco from the cooperative warehouse. This is hell compared to that."

Hub spat out bitterly, "We're in the backend of the world here. But I ain't aletting that old man straddle me much longer. 'Hub, do thisaway, Hub thataway.' Git into tantrums. The women'd keep me from lashing back. Democrats, Republicans, hell of a lot of difference."

Gordon grunted, his throbbing head not altogether cleared of that long-haired girl in the other room and the hard corn whiskey. "They play out one tit or the other. It's the same and gets you into the old hole."

Hub snorted sure.

Curley said eagerly, "We can't take no time starting things. We need a young fellow full of piss and morning glory."

Gordon fumbled his watch. He was going to see a fellow soon who could start things humming. Lanky who led the corned beef and cabbage strike at college. Lanky at the Honeybrook firehouse meeting exposing the local banker, the vigilantes, winning the farmers over to his side. Lanky, beaten up in the milltown, teeth knocked and mouth bloody, having enough presence of mind to vomit over the police blotter to use it as evidence of police brutality. Lanky always with the workers and farmers in his mouth like a double bit. Lanky. And as Gordon finished, the eyes of the two men flashed. He heard himself whispering, "You bastard, you bastard, oh you long drink of water."

Curley reached out a hand. "You sold him to us. But he ain't here. If he's your pal and your gang, you got his morning glory too."

"Me! Hell, hide and booze, and I'm done for."

"You ain't no different from us, boy. We likes them too. We can set you up, and give you hell's plenty of work." Curley slapped him on the knee. Hub's hard face quivered.

He got up laughing. Hub took his squirrel. Curley cried, "We don't take no, fellow."

They went out and plunged into wind and snow. Neither said a single word their way back.

The long dark kitchen was full of children crying. The tall broad-hipped Nettie was at the stove. Mrs. Hone with the baby saddled on her belly, said, "Hub, pa—."

Hub strode into the next room. Gordon followed. The old man lay stiff as a crowbar, the chin out like the belly of a small burrowing animal.

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"He starts agaping. It was some past noon, and then shaking a fist, fighting. He just slid back, let everything leave him. I rushed Nettie out to git the doctor. He git round to it too late."

"Kick up a fire. We ain't et all day." His wife hurried to help Nettie. A child whimpered.

Hub brought out a jug of whiskey. You could smell the corpse from the other room. Gordon took off his coat. Together they cleaned the old man up with water and corn. They carried him into the shed. They covered him over with blankets.

The kitchen remained dark and cold. Mrs. Hone had put the baby down. "We ain't got a match or drop of kerosene."

Hub jammed his hands thru his pockets. Gordon hadn't any. The last match spent on the squirrel which had gotten away. Hub pushed wife and daughter away from the stove. It was too late. He swung around as if to strike his wife. The girl walked up and faced him.

He dug up a flashlight and threw it on the table. "We'll eat them raw. The boy's staying over."

Gordon looked at him.

"We got the other bed now the old man's moved."

Mrs. Hone nodded. She hurried over cold cabbage and bread. Hub broke the squirrel and dropped pieces on each plate. One of the children started crying. "Shut, damn you." Hub stuck his finger into the corn whiskey and smeared it over the piece. "Fall on it, now. Got to git used to blood."

Gordon sat down. He rested his head on a hand. The dull ache was passing. In spite of his weariness, he saw everything falling into place, easily like the snow. It was around the hunting licenses the farmers here would get started. Curley, Hub, and Lanky with the detailed letters that could choke a horse.

Gordon looked up. The girl stood in the shaft of the flashlight for a moment like a sapling well heeled in. She sat down next to him. Mrs. Hone took the hand off the breast she was guiding the baby to, and pushed bread towards him. Hub chewed noisly, "There's the jug and the grub. Better snap to, lad. Y'll be left out in the cold."

Gordon leaned over and reached out for his food.

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BOOKS

TRADITION AND EXPERIMENT

COLLECTED POEMS 1929-1933 & A HOPE FOR POETRY, *by C. Day Lewis. Random House.* $2.50.

Many of the things that could be said about Lewis's verse are said in his essay, *A Hope for Poetry.* In this critical study Lewis examines the background and outlook of the "post-war" school of poets to which he belongs. A number of the criticisms that he makes of Auden and Spender, as well as of their predecessors, apply just as well to his own poems. Occasionally they apply too well; some of his negative comments, directed at other verse writers, swing back at his own writings like a boomerang.

One of the chief themes which Lewis treats is the matter of literary heritage, or of "ancestors" as his group calls it. He gives a good deal of space to Gerard Manley Hopkins, who has been the most important influence upon the English post-war poets. His analysis of Hopkins's technical innovations is very useful in studying Lewis's own verse, for they have affected his writing more immediately than Auden's or Spender's. The three long poem-sequences which make up Lewis's "collected" works —*Transitional Poem, From Feathers to Iron, The Magnetic Mountain*— have the same qualities as the texture of Hopkins's verse. Lewis experiments with sprung-rhythm—a metre which, according to Hopkins, is not based upon uniform feet of two or three syllables, but upon one stressed syllable in each foot, accompanied by a number of unstressed syllables or by none at all; and which approximates the rhythm of common speech, since it is founded upon stress and not upon a mechanical succession of two or three beats. He works even more constantly with the devices of alliteration and cross-assonance used by Hopkins. These devices are employed so effectively in the first set of verses in *The Magnetic Mountain* that I should like to reproduce the stanzas here—with italics to mark the internal assonance:

> *Now* to be with you, elate, u*nshared,*
> My *kestrel* joy, O *hover*er in wind,
> *Over* the quarry furiously at *rest*
> *Chaired* on shoulders of *shou*ting wind.
>
> *Where's* that unique one, wind and wing *married,*
> *Aloft* in contact of earth and *ether;*
> *Feathery* my comet, Oh too *often*
> From heav'n *harried* by carrion *cares.*
>
> No *searcher* may hope to flush that *fleet* one
> Not to be *found* by gun or *glass,*
> In old habits, *last* year's hunting-*ground,*
> whose *beat* is wind-wide, whose *perch* a split second.

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But *sure*ly will meet him, *late* or *soon,*
Who *turns* a corner into new territory;
Spirit *mat*ing afresh shall *discern* him
On the world's *noon*-top *pure*ly poised.

Void are the valleys, in town no *trace,*
And *dumb* the *sky-divi*ding hills:
Swift out*ri*der of *lum*bering earth
Oh *has*ten hither my kestrel *joy!*

with a slight variation in the fourth stanza, the rhyme scheme is uniformly —by line—*ab, cd, dc, ba.*

As a whole these technical stunts are handled with great dexterity. They are quite unobtrusive: you don't know they are there, until you stop to pick them out. At least in these verses, one may say of Lewis what he says of Hopkins—that the technical tricks are "indistinguishable from the pattern which they help to create."

In dealing with the literary heritage of the new English poets, Lewis divides verse writers into two classes: "those who assimilate a number of influences and construct an original speech from them, and those whose voice seems to come out of the blue, reminding us of nothing we have heard before." I think he is wrong in placing Spender in the second category; but Lewis unquestionably belongs to the first. And even the second type of poet does not lack what Lewis calls "poetical self-consciousness," for such an author has a "close acquaintance with other poets, dead and living," even though he "remains as a poet almost untouched by them."

The intense feeling which the young English poets have for "ancestors" is hard to find in recent American verse. Particularly since the war period, the tendency in American poetry of the social type has been to decry the first class of writing as mere imitation, to repudiate literary influence as mere bookishness. In addition to this barrier, which has been set up as a result of the peculiar national development of our letters, a class wall has been built by proletarian authors between themselves and preceding literature. Many of our poets are even more disdainful of literary tradition than their predecessors were a decade or more ago; they sweep aside all past writing with a single epithet—*bourgeois.*

Even those who do not subscribe to this naive aesthetic, those who fall into the first category of poets mentioned by Lewis, are almost as superficial in their attitude toward literary heritage. They do not negate literary influence; but they do little more than tinker with it gingerly, nibble at it casually. They echo a poet here and there, thinking they can produce poetry by "however skilful a blending of the best ingredients," as Lewis phrases it. I am afraid that none of them have been deeply earnest about it, have sought out and reworked their poetic inheritance with one-half the critical insight or persistence of their English cousins.

However, if the newer English poets have rooted themselves in a poetic tradition, they have stopped at this point. The seed which they have got out of traditional soil has been replanted in the same soil. So far they have failed to strike out for really new territory—as the Romantic poets did, for example. What they have *not* done is put very well by

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Lewis in the first paragraph of his essay: "In English poetry there have been several occasions on which the younger son, fretting against parental authority, weary of routine work on the home farm, suspecting too that the soil needs a rest, has packed his bag and set out for a far country." While his neighbors are sure that he must be going to pot in some strange place, "his father smiles indulgently, feeling a secret pride, assured of the vigour of his seed." Finally he returns, "not a broken prodigal" but a worldly personage, with "many acres under cultivation."

In spite of their allegiance to Communism, Lewis and his contemporaries have not departed for a "far country." They seem incapable of venturing away from their fathers' estate. Their work is encased in a conventional pattern; they never seem to be able to get out of this traditional mold, although they try continually to grope their way beyond it. Most of their labor seems to consist in closing the open end of an old tradition, rather than in forming a new one. They are not the pioneers of a new poetry.

Perhaps their spirit of enterprise has been stifled by too much "ancestor worship," by being tied too securely to the apron strings of "parental authority." Perhaps it is because they have not assimilated the manners of their ancestors thoroughly enough to work out their own personal style. More accurately, perhaps it is due to their assimilating "reactionary" as well as "progressive" qualities of earlier poets. However, these seem to be very minor reasons. The matter is more fundamental than the mere influence of certain poets upon others. It is connected with the entire social direction and state of recent literature, as well as with the whole movement of social forces at the present time. The newer English poets have been unable to progress very far beyond their predecessors, not simply because they have been affected by them, but because, like their ancestors, they are hemmed in on all sides by social and cultural barriers which they have been unable to break through.

This is illustrated by their attitude toward the problem of *communication* (or, as it is more familiarly known, of *audience*), which is the most crucial issue in modern poetry. Lewis is, of course, greatly concerned with this problem and comments upon it repeatedly in his critical essay. In examining the work of Hopkins, he attributes its obscurity "not to a clouded imagination or an unsettled intellect, but to lightning dashes from image to image, so quick that we are unable at first to perceive the points of contact." Eliot's obscurity, on the other hand, is "deliberate," caused by the running together of a series of images without logical continuity—in the same way a series of unconnected shots are run together in a movie, in order to express the emotions of a character at a critical moment. In addition to these devices, which are used in present-day English verse, Lewis also points to the "search for methods of restoring freshness to words" which is one of the chief reasons for the obscurity of post-war poetry.

But the root cause, according to Lewis, is to be found in the development of city life, which brings with it an "expansion of the social unit to a size at which it becomes impossible for the individual to have any real contact with his fellows and thus to benefit from the group." "In the face of this intolerable complexity," Lewis declares, "the sensitive in-

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dividual feels compelled to retire upon himself, to create artificially for himself a world of manageable proportions." The poet must, first of all, find a "point from which he may begin to work outward again." In this process he is "bound to be obscure, for he is talking to himself and to his friends—to that tiny, temporarily isolated unit with which communication is possible, with whom he can take a certain number of things for granted."

This is what Lewis and his school have tried to do; they have attempted to form a "compact working social group," made up of themselves, with a set of subjective symbols (not only ideas and attitudes but stenographic word-signs like *kestrel, railhead, pylons*) intelligible largely to themselves.

Obviously this is no solution. It is a complete rout, a method at widening the gap between the poet and his audience instead of bringing them closer together. It shows that their work is being pushed in the same direction as their ancestors—by the same social factors which have driven bourgeois poetry deeper and deeper into the blind alley of obscurity, as well as by the *internal* development of poetry itself, that is, by the wearing out of familiar modes of poetic expression. Lacking the social background or the immersion in revolutionary activity that might help them to re-establish contact with a wide audience, and lacking also the imaginative intensity and magnitude that might help them to solve the internal troubles of modern verse, they flutter helplessly against the walls in which conventional poetry is still encased, unable to break out into the open. In setting up a narrow clique (even though it is to act only as a temporary expedient, as a means of later "working outward again"), they are retreating from the problem they want to solve. Some of the American proletarian poets, who have grown up within the Communist movement or have spent their lives in the workingclass, have been more successful—exactly because they have been a part of the workingclass, a part of the feelings and experiences of the masses—in coping with this formidable matter. For them the revolutionary movement is becoming what the English poets yearn for—a homogeneous social unit with a "widely accepted system of morals" and a "clearly defined circumference of imagination."

In saying this I am not trying to preach, to assure the English poets that immersion in the waters of revolutionary activity will cleanse them of all sin. It is doubtful whether they could effect such a change when one considers the nature of their lives and experiences. It is even doubtful whether their actual participation in revolutionary work would solve their difficulties—at least not until they had undergone a long process of re-education, of re-making. What I have been trying to do is not to evaluate the way they write or to condemn them for not writing in a different way; I have only been trying to say that they are working along the same path as their predecessors, that they seem no more likely to solve the contemporary problem of communication than their ancestors.

This is not an intrinsic criticism of their verse, any more than blaming Thomas Gray for not being a Romanticist would be a legitimate comment on his poetry. It is, however, a criticism of what they have not been able to do but apparently think they are doing.

Within the limitations of their vision, they are very skillful poets.

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Lewis seems the surest of them. The three books of verse included in his "collected" works show a disciplined progression. *Transitional Poem*, dealing with the "pursuit of single-mindedness" is a lengthy exercise in metaphysical writing. Its theme, an individualized abstraction, is an example of what a proletarian poet, immersed in central social experience, would not be likely to write about; or, if impelled to do so, he would handle it in a more objective, social manner. It is full of little fragments, handled with amazing dexterity, like—

What use the difference
Between a gust that twitters
Along the wainscot at dawn
And a burly wind playing the zany
In fields of barleycorn?

Obscure as some of his references are, one feels occasionally that Lewis's verse is like this stanza from *Transitional Poem*—

Charabancs shout along the lane
And summer gales bay in the wood
No less superbly because I can't explain
What I have understood.

However, there is one ironical stanza in this poetic cycle which bounces back at its own author—

Few things can more inflame
This far too combative heart
Than the intellectual Quixotes of the age
Prattling of abstract art.

From Feathers to Iron deals with the thoughts of the poet before the birth of his first child. It is breezy but it also has the tight, clipped quality of intellectualized verse. In it, too, there are little poetic bits whose effect is dissipated because they are merely sprinkled over the fibre of the poem.

The Magnetic Mountain is the most successful of the three and the most revolutionary. It describes a railroad journey toward the magnetic mountain—the classless society. The very fact that this concept is expressed in romantic symbols, is itself a reflection of the emptiness of experience of the creative writer who tries to voice in aesthetic terms the idea which he has accepted only abstractly. Nevertheless, the orientation of the poet toward these symbols and the poetic response is genuine—

Somewhere beyond the railheads
Of reason, south or north,
Lies a magnetic mountain
Riveting sky to earth.
* * *
Kestrel who yearly changes

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His tenement of space
At the last hovering
May signify that place.

* * *

Oh there's a mine of metal,
Enough to make me rich
And build right over chaos
A cantilever bridge.

ALAN CALMER

AMERICAN TRAGEDY

JUDGMENT DAY, *by James T. Farrell. Vanguard Press.* $2.50.

Sweeping literary generalizations are often misleading, but Farrell's work has been embalmed in so many glib labels that a definitive characterization is desirable. In scope and in method the trilogy which *Judgment Day* concludes has much in common with the tradition of European *naturalism*—with Balzac and Flaubert and Zola. In his fidelity to the routine of men's lives, and in the accumulation of motive and action to sketch a large social landscape, Farrell is an American *naturalist.* His immediate American predecessor is Dreiser, but Dreiser hewed his way through American life, equipped with little save a keen eye and a rusty version of nineteenth century mechanism. Farrell's social philosophy, on the other hand, obtrudes less and permits him to see more. And Farrell brings more literary erudition to his writing. Farrell is a naturalist not because his characters are sordid nor because they talk slang, but because they move easily through careers which their social position has cut for them. Farrell pulls no wires behind the scenes.

Judgment Day takes Studs Lonigan into the responsibilities of manhood. He is about to be married. He loses his money in the crash of the Insull empire. A weak heart prevents him from continuing to work as a house painter for his father. He must get married as soon as possible because his girl, Catherine, is pregnant. In looking for another job he catches pneumonia and dies after a harrowing illness. But his death is foreshadowed throughout the book by his increasingly recurrent heart attacks. And around this are woven several themes of doom, such as Studs' continued memories of past strength and glory, and his regrets at having made various missteps.

It is significant that Studs dies at the time of his greatest social responsibility, when he is faced with the necessity of proving his position in society, his way of earning a living. His death then becomes a symbol of his failure to find a rationale and a method of living. And this is also the failure of the lower middle class to resist its ultimate extinction as a class, to check its course into the proletariat or into the gutter. Studs' physical

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and moral degeneration gains momentum as he hunts desperately for a job. His collapse symbolizes the destiny of all the young men of whom Studs is a composite. The reader gets a glimpse of possible resolution in the communist parade which the father of Studs watches on his way home to his son's deathbed. Studs dies simply because he cannot live.

Since the trilogy is so clearly a panorama of a social group, any literary judgment of it must take into account the quality of experience which Farrell describes. Farrell's writing has been called statistical, a piling up of detail without the achievement of great psychological and dramatic moments. Aside from the fact that there is a note of prejudice and querulousness in such a criticism, since no one method is *ipso facto* superior to another, there is sufficient justification for the methods Farrell employs to achieve his effects. The plateau quality of *Judgment Day,* its even drive to resolution, the absence of sharp conflict—all evoke the character of its actual counterpart: the lechery, the *Sunday School* love, the slumming, the mock-heroic athleticism, the morbid interest in sports, the self conscious social chatter, the braggadacio, of a people who fluctuate temporarily in economic position or merely psychologically between a tenuous petty bourgeois respectability and a lumpen existence. True to his place in American history, Studs sinks slowly into a quicksand instead of being swung by a whirlpool of forces like the characters in *Man's Fate* who are carried through a tempestuous uprising. And the way Studs dies (heart trouble and pneumonia), taken out of its entire social meaning, is not a major tragic theme. But this too takes on importance as a symbol of slow petering out. Only a Thornton Wilder could set a Greek tragedy in the environment of Farrell's characters.

There might be some question, however, about the possibility of greater concentration in the trilogy. I cannot see how such a question can be settled by speculation, but a general reading of the novels gives the impression that greater concentration would have improved the trilogy. Perhaps one long novel might have sacrificed little in scope, while gaining much in intensity. As a result, the scenes which remained would have greater typicality, and the dramatic curve of development would rise and fall more sharply. To be judicious, however, one would have to say that such an opinion should be critically substantiated by careful reconstruction of the trilogy, and that a revised trilogy by Farrell himself would be the final test.

Farrell's remarkable dictaphonic ear for American speech has been remarked on. But it is sometimes forgotten, especially by pseudo-realistic novelists, that a novel of any value cannot be compounded of slang conversation and what is sometimes thought of as "Americanese" for the author's commentary. Farrell's talent lies in his recognizing that speech is only one form of behavior, and that a modulation of idiom is necessary to effect changes of mood, situation and character. The peak of Farrell's linguistic accomplishment is reached when he weaves many phases of Studs' experiences in terms of their idiomatic equivalents into a single attitude, as when Studs rehearses the virtues of Roosevelt in terms of sex, sport and warfare as well as politics. Current American idioms have an independent rhythmic interest, but their main value for fiction is in lighting up character and situation.

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Most of Farrell's characters are apprentice or accomplished drugstore cowboys. Some of them get *respectable* jobs; some make the pool room their profession; some combine both. As American politics go, they provide a reserve for stormtroopers or they veer toward the working class. Farrell could not have made any such resolution in his novel at this time. Instead he created Studs Lonigan as the archtype of irresolution. And Studs is really one of the memorable characters of literature. As years pass he will probably take on the reality that Bloom and Babbitt, for example, have for us.

Readers who are looking for more class-conscious characters in more typical revolutionary situations will look forward to Farrell's new tetralogy built around Danny O'Neill, the sensitive studious boy who appears in *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan* as an incipient communist.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS

DIALECTIC OF LOVE AND HATRED

POEMS, *by Kenneth Fearing. New York: Dynamo Press.* $1.00.

The substance of these poems is rhetoric. But this is not said in disparagement, for it is a rhetoric created out of understanding and emotion, and charged with conviction. Within its limits there is great variousness of manner: Addisonian balance, ecclesiastical chanting, the persuasion of Auden's *The Orators,* the collectivity of Dos Passos' *The Unknown Soldier,* the specific madness of Joyce's Nighttown fantasy. The most characteristic mode is a kind of arrangement perhaps suggested by Eliot's lines:

> So I would have had him leave
> So I would have had her stand and grieve,
> So he would have left.

For the poet is not dealing, in a sense, with things experienced, but with experimental and very revelatory patterns that he himself creates. He is in the laboratory breaking down metropolitan routine, journalistic dope-dreams, official deception ,and testing their components by new juxtapositions, new conditions. He has all the caution of a scientist, makes most of his statements conditional, begins long series with a repeated *so* or *what* or *such* or *whether.* But the direction in which his experiments are leading him is unmistakable.

In his introduction Edward Dahlberg speaks of this process as "reasoned derangement of all the senses," and recalls the French Symbolists. But the reason for this derangement is not the final surrealist flight of the individual or the simple mirroring of contemporary madness. At times Fearing drops into the latter easiness, but not often. For he understands

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this madness has causes and agents. And his derangements are diagrams for the reader. Such passages as:

You heard the gentleman, with automatic precision, speak the truth
Cheers. Triumph.
And then mechanically it followed the gentleman lied.
Deafening applause. Flashlights, cameras, microphones.

or:

All winter she came there, begging for milk. So we had the
shacks along the river destroyed by police.

or:

you will not forget the voice of the bought magistrate
quivering in horror through the courtroom above
prostitute and pimp.

are not even non-sequiturs, but ironic statements of a necessary hypocrisy.

This method is not limited to phrases; whole poems are based on ideas or conceits, *Obituary,* for instance, and *What if Mr. Jesse James Should Some Day Die?* Nearly all the poems have a firm conceptual unity of some kind. I think that is one reason why Kenneth Fearing's work has been so heartily acclaimed. In reading most proletarian poetry and many proletarian novels and short stories you feel that the writers found it sufficient to class-angle their material, to observe it from the correct position. There is technique, but not form, not the achievement of creation. The reader loses the sense of sharing in rediscovery and reaffirmation, a quality that is essential to propaganda and that inheres in true originality of form. This quality Fearing has to a very high degree. And although he could be easily spotted as the author of any given poem, the volume has the wide variety, the complete shifts of a newsreel sequence.

His originality is, however, almost completely impersonal. Memories, autobiography, individual sensibility are not permitted to complicate the relentless satire. One is conscious of the author only from the emotion that informs the poems, from the questioning eyes fixed on the reader from behind the printed page. Grammatically this becomes great dependence on the imperative and interrogative verb forms and on the third and, even more, the second persons. Here are the beginnings of a few poems as they follow in unbroken sequence in the volume: "You will remember," "Take him away," "Let us present," "This advantage to be seized," "Even when your friend," "You heard the gentleman." Perhaps the device is used excessively, but it has not the purpose for Fearing that has made it in other writers a contemporary trick. They wish to avoid responsibility or to fake suggestiveness, as in the common and meaningless use of "what" as a demonstrative adjective in poetry. But Fearing is not avoiding responsibility, he is making his reader share it, by the authenticity of his material, the power of his indictment. "What will you do?" he asks, "What will you do? What will you do?" Only a phrase here and there gives the answer directly, the demand for a "dream that lives and grows . . . that stands and quickens,"

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desire of millions, become more real than warmth and breath and strength and bread.

Kenneth Fearing speaks wittily with a formal ingenuity that seldom becomes mechanical or prolix, and rich specific allusiveness, topical and popular, that has made comparison with Walt Whitman inevitable. On the other hand there are no metrics, few memorable phrases or images, and very little lyricism. But some of the tenderer passages have a very provocative ambiguity. Here is one from *Lullaby*:

Is the night that wraps all the huts of the south and folds
the empty barns of the west;
is the wind that fans the roadside fire;
are the trees that line the country estates, tall as the
lynch trees, as straight, as black;
is the moon that lights the mining towns, dim as the
light upon tenement roofs, grey upon the hands at
the bars of Moabit, cold as the bars of the Tombs.

Most recent revolutionary poetry has shied away from beauty because pleasure in beauty, particularly in its more traditional forms, has seemed a kind of acceptance, or an escape from deeper significance. But Fearing by his firm fusion of both elements has intensified both. The emotions that give his rhetoric life spring as much from a vision of the good as from indignation with present evil, although the two are not really separable. It is heartening to see such passion coming into revolutionary literature amidst the jargon of intellectualism and the child's prose of behaviourists. A comparison with political eloquence of the French Revolution or the equalitarian and abolitionist movements in our own early republic makes most modern revolutionary speech seem emotionally inadequate to the forces behind it and the goal it announces. But of late there has been a broadening of emphasis, a deeper consciousness of the powerful dialectic which these poems of Kenneth Fearing so richly express, the dialectic both of hatred and of love, love of life, of country, of the masses and the future they shall create.

OBED BROOKS

PROGRESS OR RETROGRESSION?

KNEEL TO THE RISING SUN and *Other Stories, By Erskine Caldwell. The Viking Press.* $2.00.

Erskine Caldwell has become more certain of himself during the past few years. The seventeen stories in his new volume are written with ease of manner, and, in most cases, with surety of execution. Occasionally, he finds a theme important enough for his abilities at their best, and the result is a remarkably moving tale like the title story of this collection or—even better—*Masses of Men. Kneel to the Rising Sun,* a narrative of the events leading up to a lynching, and of the lynching itself, deserves to be included

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in every collection of modern American short stories. The same can be said for *Masses of Men,* in which a destitute widow, whose three children are starving, prostitutes her little ten-year-old girl to a stranger for twenty five cents.

These, however, are the only two stories that approach major importance in the entire collection. Of the others, four are definitely good (*Candy-Man Beechum, The Walnut Hunt, Daughter* and *Blue Boy*) and four are (despite Caldwell's distintive treatment, in which an original twist gives the story a character of its own) decidedly mediocre. The remaining seven tales are written, and must be treated, on a different and lower plane. They are evidence of Caldwell's most flippant and purposeless mood, despite their momentary humor. They belong to the category which I characterized as "anecdote writing" in a review of his first book, *American Earth,* four years ago.

Strangely enough, Caldwell has improved even in this limited phase of his work. His special talent for handling slight, almost meaningless material deftly, bringing out the maximum effect with the appearance of almost effortless ease, is unparalleled in modern American fiction. In this connection, his work is greatly similar to that of David Garnett, notwithstanding their differences of approach, of temperamet, of stylistic method. But even in these slight humorous stories, which comprise the bulk of his published work, Caldwell makes a contact with heality beyond the scope of his localized, limited material. Whether he does so intentionally or unconsciously, this is the saving virtue of nine-tenths of his writing. One has only to read his *American Earth,* and *We Are the Living,* and the novels, *Tobacco Road, God's Little Acre* and *Journeyman,* to verify this statement.

It would be comparatively easy to dissect several of Caldwell's stories —even the more successful ones—and to show where he fails in specific cases to reveal character, to develop his situations, to probe more deeply into his people's motives. But it would be difficult to take a single story of his and explain its general failure to go beyond a certain point; to determine just why his work very rarely achieves a major mood. The answer can, however, be stated in general terms.

Caldwell as a writer operates primarily on a sensory plane. He has seen and he knows the life of the people about whom he writes. He understands them and has a great tolerance toward, and compassion for them. This is why is he able to record their lives, their tantrums, their petty qualities and their occasional heroism faithfully and convincingly, so that the reader sympathizes, laughs with or at them. But here his virtues as a writer end, and the real reason for his larger failure begins. The lives of his characters are too seldom transmitted to that higher region of the mind where alone they can be resolved into completely meaningful personaliities. They are almost never perceived in their entirety, merely felt as scattered and fragmentary points of contact. James T. Farrell, for example, possesses this higher sensitivity and perception, this ability to *understand* his material on a rigorous intellectual level; and these things give Farrell's work major possibilities. But Caldwell, handicapped by the lack of them, has failed so far to progress beyond a pleasant, easy competence, and a preoccupation with themes that seldom advance beyond trivial and fragmentary stages.

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Erskine Caldwell is still coasting along in that easy manner which he had mastered when his first book, *American Earth,* appeared. I say "manner" advisedly; it is not a style. Unless he applies himself more painstakingly to his art, unless he attempts larger themes, he may never fulfill any of his early promise, but end in a literary grave next to another American writer whom in many ways he resembles, Bret Harte. Harte also emerged once with a new and racy talent, with a gift for portraying the people of a strange locale; but he played the same tune on the same guitar over and over again. His works are almost completely forgotten today.

Caldwell seems to be following too closely this fatal line of least resistance. It is about time he discarded the meaningless guitar for a sturdier, more intricate and more developed instrument; time that he attempted to study new themes. He may fail at first. But such a failure will be preferable to the stagnation which threatens him.

EDWIN ROLFE

THE LOWER DEPTHS

SOMEBODY IN BOOTS, *by Nelson Algren. Vanguard Press.* $2.50.

This is the first novel of a young writer whose literary efforts originated and took on definite shape inside the revolutionary movement. As such, this novel merits the particular attention of our critics, as it is among the first fruit of a literature nurtured and reared on Marxist thought and direction. Unfortunately, those who do the sowing don't always show up for the harvest: to be ignored or captiously disparaged by the gadfly-reviewers of the bourgeois newspapers and periodicals is often the price of revolutionary integrity, but when our own criticism reacts with scant interest to a work as powerful as this, it argues a one-sided awareness of literary currents, a concentration on some schools and groups of writers to the exclusion of all others. So far as I know, *Somebody in Boots* received but two meager reviews in the revolutionary press; and one of the reviews (in the *Daily Worker*) was supercilious in tone and, to my mind, wide off the mark in its estimate of the book.

Stories and novels dealing with the jungle-lives of the hobo world—lives pulverized by hunger and homelessness—are by no means rare in American fiction. Many of these books, however, have been mere exploitations of gruesome material, attempts to cash in on the horrible by turning it into an emotional aphrodisiac for sated readers. Hence the cruel buffooneries on the theme of the subhuman that every so often hit the circulating libraries. *Somebody in Boots* differs from these firecrackers in that it is the first Marxist portrayal of box-car men and their ways. Here we find no reportorial piling up of explosive scenes, but a careful shaping and recreation of experience mounting to an exact social correlation. The life of the lumpen-proletariat, which this novel vivifies in valid images of action and character, is seen realistically as a life that prepares it "far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue," as Marx put it, than for active resistance to oppression. Such is the role of this

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"rotting mass" in modern society, although here and there, under the impact of some tremendous event, parts of this mass may be swept into the proletarian movement. With this conception firmly in mind, Algren has created the first complete portrait of the lumpenproletariat in American revolutionary literature.

Cass McKay, the central character of the book, is the living embodiment of this conception. He is born on the West Texas prairie in a home that "stood like a casual box on the border." His family had no place in the world; his sister becomes a prostitute, his father a murderer. Cass is never granted the opportunity to develop his human faculties, and although from earliest childhood he has seen the blood of hoboes run down "the gleaming yellow rail,—warm wet blood running black and slow beneath the unpitying sun"—he finds no way of living save that of joining the horde of wanderers. Thenceforward his life become a dark journey of pain and evil. A boundless brutality, an unspeakable insane violence pervades each episode in this narrative of men and women forever mutilated, forever damend. A woman is delivered of her baby in a dark and cold reefer; a Negro girl is raped in the woods by a band of bums, and Cass too "smelled the dark woman, her thighs and her womb," feeling a strong hand "pushing him from behind"; in the El Paso County Jail he meets Nubby O'Neil, a pervert who terrorizes the prisoners through a benevolent arrangement with the law, and when Cass comes out he joins Nubby in a hold-up. Later, alone in Chicago, he meets the prostitute Norah and makes her his partner in pursuing the trade Nubby taught him. He is caught and sent to prison. Free again, he earns a precarious living by peddling peanuts and candy in a burlesque house; but when he finds that he cannot effect the return of Norah he rejoins Nubby to disappear in the army of the homeless. Only for one fleeting moment is Cass brought face to face with class organization, but his feeble mentality cannot comprehend the giant audacity of struggle, and aping on the lowest level the prejudices and hatreds of his masters in the upper tiers, he finally sinks into that stupor from which his love for Norah had once promised to save him.

The other focal point of the novel is the special "appreciation," so to speak, which it accords to the law, the railroad police, the bulls of all denominations who practice legal violence on the defenceless tramps. The pages fairly crackle with sinuous prose when the author evokes the image of the bulls, advancing like jungle-cats—"as though on hips forged of rock and rubber"—to pounce on their verminous prey. These carnivorous creatures, sodden with bestiality, alive to nothing but food, drink and blows, are a true incarnation of the system which is dependent on them for its safety. And it is in such plastic, almost tactile particularizations that the underworld of the hunted merges with the upper world of the hunters, compelling the innate horror of contemporary civilization to flood a close-up that will not fade.

Algren's prose is indigenous in every detail—in dialogue, the tonality of structure, and the fabric of place-names cunningly woven into the narrative like a refrain in a bold voice. A book as authentically American as this should be required reading for every eagle orator in American letters.

PHILIP RAHV

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